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BECOMING THE BASTARD:
AN EXPLORTION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS
FOR PREPARING THE ROLE OF EDMUND
IN KING LEAR

by

Daniel Gilbert

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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MAJOR: Theatre Arts

Under the Supervision of Professor Harris Smith

Lincoln, NE

May, 2010

BECOMING THE BASTARD:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS
FOR PREPARING THE ROLE OF EDMUND
IN KING LEAR

Daniel Gilbert, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: Harris Smith

This thesis is a documentation of the creative process I utilized in the preparation of the role of Edmund in the 2009 UNL production of William Shakespeare's King Lear. It is comprised of three main parts. Part One: *Research* consists of all compiled materials pertaining to the life and work of William Shakespeare and his play King Lear; including play structure, language and themes. Part Two: *Process* is an examination of the rehearsal process and methodology used in character development. Part Three: *Evaluation* is a conclusion of the process and provides faculty responses as well as self examinations regarding the success or failure of the performance; including journals, analyses and interviews.

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Last and most certainly not least; my fellow M.F.A. graduate acting student Jason Francis. We made it buddy. My only regret is that you couldn't be here to share it with us. I miss you. Thank you for everything.

INTRODUCTION

As we drew near to the end of the second year of our M.F.A. training at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln we began preparing to embark on our thesis studies. Since we first began our training here frequent rumors have circulated that our thesis project would most likely be William Shakespeare's King Lear. If this is indeed to be our thesis project that would please me greatly. Lear was written later in Shakespeare's career, somewhere between 1603 and 1606, and is considered by some to be his masterpiece. Lear has one of the richest banks of characters and one of the most moving plots ever devised; not to mention one of my dream roles, Edmund. When I look at Lear at this stage in my life there are only two roles I see myself as playing and that would be either Edgar or Edmund. Now I know I look more the Edgar type, the hero; but I've played that type of role a great deal and would much prefer to sink my teeth into Edmund, the villain, the bastard. There's nothing wrong with Edgar. Edgar is a great role and I hope someday to play him as well, but for now I feel that to tackle the role of Edmund would be a greater challenge for me.

During the last month of classes we were informed that it was official! We were indeed going to be doing King Lear for our thesis. We had auditions scheduled for Professor Virginia Smith and Dr. Ian Borden on Wednesday, April 29th during acting class and it was still undecided as to which of the two would direct. Professor Smith suggested that for the audition we prepare one or two monologues that were geared towards our desired role and that we may prepare a piece from the show if we like. This was a rare opportunity. In the real world it is, of course, customary to be extremely

familiar with the show you are auditioning for and to audition with material appropriate to the show and your desired role. However, it is very uncommon to ever get the chance to audition with material from the actual show you are auditioning for; in fact such a move is usually frowned upon. In lieu of this I prepared both an Iago monologue and an Edmund monologue. Iago and Edmund are very similar Shakespearian characters. They are both villains. They both plot the downfall and demise of their foreseeable adversaries with intricate treachery. They are both driven by lust for more than one woman and they are both driven, I think, by jealousy. There are, of course, other motives (greed, anger, pride) driving these two, but jealousy “the green-ey’d monster” (III. iii. 171) is, I think, the main driving force¹. It’s one of the most blinding forces there is and that sheer blindness is only cleared when they are utterly destroyed by their own devices and forced to atone for their actions and this is where the Elizabethan notion of redemption comes into play. I decided to do two pieces for a number of reasons. I chose to do an Edmund piece because I wanted to show Professor Smith and Dr. Borden my take on Edmund. I prepared his first soliloquy “Thou, nature, art my goddess” (I. ii. 29)². This is a perfect selection for showcasing my take on Edmund because in it he deals with his innermost, essential issues as a character, it’s what gives rise to all of his actions. I also chose to do Iago’s soliloquy, “And what’s he then that says I play the villain?” (II. iii. 330), because I feel that with this selection I could show them some of the other colors I see in Edmund.

¹ All Shakespearean quotations from plays, other than King Lear, are from David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1980).

² All Shakespearean quotations from King Lear are from Mowat, Brabara A., and Werstein, Paul, ed. King Lear. New York: Washington Square Press, 1993.

The auditions went well and I felt that I showed Virginia and Ian the essence of what I wanted them to see. However, Ian did call me out on some of my vocal issues and I could already tell that my voice would be one of my main areas of focus for this role and I was looking forward to it. A few days later Virginia e-mailed us to let us know her decisions about the casting of Lear and I got Edmund. The cast list was as follows:

Duke of Cornwall: Kyle Broussard
Earl of Kent: Robie Hayek
Earl of Gloucester: Jason Francis
Edgar, son of Gloucester: Ryan Kathman
Edmund, bastard son of Gloucester: Daniel Gilbert
Goneril, daughter to Lear: Beth King
Regan, daughter to Lear: Tiffiney Baker
Cordelia, daughter to Lear: Lucy Lockamy

One of the most exciting things about this whole process and the show itself was that the university brought in an equity actor, Steve Patterson, to play the role of King Lear. Although Edmund and Lear never have any interaction it was an amazing learning experience for us all.

RESEARCH

William Shakespeare:
The social, political and religious influences that shaped his life and his work

The period of theatre history during which William Shakespeare lived and wrote his plays was characteristically riddled with social, political and religious strife. However it was due, in part, to such conflict that the Golden age of English theatre, Shakespeare's theatre, came to be. English history had, for many centuries, been plagued by periods of civil unrest and multiple foreign conflicts and it is for these two reasons in particular that the effects of the Renaissance were not seen in England until near the later end of the 15th century. "Medieval theatrical practices continued to be dominant and it was not until the reign of King Henry VII (1485-1509), the originator of the Tudor blood-line, that the spirit of the Renaissance began to be felt" (Brockett 108). Correspondingly, it was about this same time that humanism began to take hold and work its affects on the world of English theatre. Scholars such as Erasmus and Colet began their teachings at the prominent universities of Cambridge and Oxford; and with their influences from abroad they passed on to English scholars and writers an affinity for ancient literature. By 1497 the courts began to see the effects of humanism in drama through morality plays and from there the influence spread. Their moralistic qualities were used as templates for propaganda plays during the rule of Henry VIII (1509-1547). "Despite the humanist influence," on drama, "medieval practices and conventions continued to dominate English theatre through most of the 16th century" (Brockett109). Therefore, contrary to popular belief, William Shakespeare should be considered a medieval playwright. Ultimately many sources over many years took part in the molding and creation of Elizabethan English theatre, but none were as notable as the religious and political scandals surrounding King Henry VIII and his break with the Catholic Church between

the years of 1529 and 1536. Henry set into motion one of England's most bloody and embarrassing marks, a Catholic/Protestant shift that would see "three changes of the national religion in twelve years" (Wood. Pt. 1, 8:22).

The action of King Henry VIII's secession from the Catholic Church established England as "the first major nation to embrace Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation which began in 1517" (Brockett 110). This division, however, would not last long. After Henry's death in 1547, his son, Edward VI (1547-1553), ascended the throne and ruled for only six short years, whereupon he too died. Next in line was Henry's oldest daughter, Mary I (1553-1558) and with her father and brother dead, Mary intended to repair the religious rift and reestablish England and its people to Catholicism. Mary was so intent on the English crown's return to Catholicism that to help secure the bond and England's rule she wed the Catholic prince of Spain, Phillip II. When Mary I died her sister, Elizabeth I (1558-1603), a Protestant, came to power and strove to make the nation Protestant once more. This would not be an easy task. On one side Elizabeth had the catholic prince Phillip II who made it his sworn duty to remove her from the throne and on the other side she had the catholic Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), whom as grandniece of Henry the people saw as the true heir.

It was during this turbulent point in history, six years into Elizabeth's reign, on April 26th 1564, that William Shakespeare was born. He was the son of John and Mary Shakespeare who lived in the village of Wilmcote, county Warwickshire, just outside of Stratford upon Avon. Shakespeare's heritage on his mother's side was his Catholic grandfather, a farmer by the name of Robert Arden, a name which interestingly enough would appear in the form of a forest in some of his plays. John Shakespeare didn't want

the struggles of a farming life for his family and soon after Shakespeare's birth moved them into Stratford where he set up shop as a master glove smith. Aside from his glove making business John also pursued a career in politics. In July of 1565 he joined the civic order as a town councilman and eventually worked his way up to Mayor of Stratford, one of the Queens' chief officers, by 1568.

Social, political and religious hardships spread far and were felt well outside the cities in the farmlands where Shakespeare and his family resided. As a Protestant ruler, Elizabeth saw the teachings of Catholicism in terms of "childish superstition" and "the English people were to be liberated people from old thoughts and ways;" and with this powerful rise of Protestantism came an increase in governmental control (Wood. Pt. 1, 16:16-16:28). This was bad news for nearly half the country, including Shakespeare's family, who were devout Catholics. Serving on the council, especially as Mayor, meant that one often had to counterbalance their friends and their beliefs with their duty to uphold the Queen's desire. However, when Elizabeth passed new governmental statutes requiring all chapels to deface their Catholic tapestries John and his fellow guild members simply gave them a light coating of whitewash to hide them.

England was not only undergoing a cultural revolution, but an educational one as well and another major way in which the government attempted to control religion was to control the education of England's youth. Elizabeth declared that the "old ways" of Catholic schooling were null and void making way for newer Protestant teachings; together with the government she saw Shakespeare and his fellow school mates as a "target generation" for achieving protestant reform "and for them, grammar and Protestant godliness would go hand-in-hand" (Wood. Pt. 1, 18:16). Luckily for

Shakespeare, while the government had the say of religion each individual city or town was in charge of selecting a teacher and when he began his schooling in 1571 at age seven, four of his six teachers “were sympathizers with the old faith” of Catholicism (Wood. Pt. 1, 19:01). His childhood school master was just such a sympathizer and he received an education full of Catholic stories, poetry, Latin and most importantly, plays. Shakespeare’s curriculum was outstanding and thanks to Elizabeth’s desire for strong education his experimental generation was to be the most literary and educated thus far in England’s history. Below is an example, from an institute in Ipswich, of the average grammar school’s curriculum of the period:

- 1st and 2nd form – Latin Grammar
- 3rd form – Latin Versions of Aesop and Terrence
- 4th form – Vergil
- 5th form – Cicero
- 6th form – Caesar
- 7th form – Horace, Ovid and compositions of Latin Verse (Ferguson 6)

It was also about this time that Shakespeare’s parents took him to Coventry to see the mystery plays of the bible. These plays were a great influence on the young man and would be outlawed by the time he turned 15. When Shakespeare turned 9 he transitioned into “Big School” and it was here that Shakespeare discovered his love for poetry and especially of the poet Ovid (Wood. Pt. 1, 30:21). Shakespeare’s school days, however, were numbered. Times were tough and at age 12, only three years into formal schooling, his father’s gloving business began to fail. Shortly before this, whether out of greed or in order to provide for his family, John began a double life as a brogger, an illegal dealer of wool. By the time he was fourteen, Shakespeare’s family was under such financial strain that he had to quit school to help out at home. This cut Shakespeare off from any hopes of higher education at the universities.

In 1580, religious tensions were on the rise and England was hard hit by a wool recession. It was at this time that the Catholic Church deemed it a mortal sin to attend Protestant church and that Pope Gregory XIII moved to officially excommunicate Queen Elizabeth. She and the government saw this as an opportunity and doubled their efforts to outlaw Catholicism and began to tighten the reigns on religion and brogging, putting further strain on the nation and the livelihood of the Shakespeare family. As an added precaution, Pope Gregory XIII sent a secret group of Jesuit missionaries, lead by Edmond Campion, into England in an attempt to “save the soul of England and its thousand year history” (Wood. Pt. 1, 36:21). Campion and his missionaries set up Catholic safe houses all across the countryside and began distributing religious pamphlets to guide the faithful in this time of darkness. Elizabeth “feared constant compromise of Protestant security by factionalism” (Brockett n1 10); and it was for this reason above any other that Elizabeth’s reign was one which was “policed” and “full of spies” (Wood. Pt. 1, 24:05). The Queen lashed out at the Catholics and ordered hundreds to be arrested and brought in for questioning in the matters and among those hauled in was Shakespeare’s father John Shakespeare. Eventually tensions subsided and detainees were released.

By 1582, with no hope for further education, Shakespeare, now 18, began courting; and by November that year, he married Anne Hathaway. For the wedding festivities Shakespeare wrote Anne a sonnet proclaiming his love and devotion to his new wife. This sonnet serves as his first known writing. The couple’s journey from courtship and marriage were a bit rushed. They applied for their license on the 27th of November and were married by the end of the month, and for good reasons; because Anne, eight or nine years Shakespeare’s senior, was pregnant. Five months after they wed their first

child, Susanna, was born. Now a father and a husband, Shakespeare was not only barred from academia, but was also restricted from the career of an apprentice which left him little to no options for a future that might provide for his family. According to Wood, in 1583, things took an even bleaker turn for the worse when Sir Thomas Lucy, “the most powerful local lord,” had Shakespeare “beaten and jailed and then kicked/out of town for pouching” (Wood. Pt. 1, 48:24). This would not be the Shakespeare’s only run in with Sir Lucy. In 1583 political and religious sensitivities would prove fatal to the Ardens, Shakespeare’s family on his mother’s side, when John Summerville, son-in-law of Edward Arden, was arrested on grounds of treason. One night in a pub in Warwickshire, a drunken Summerville began ranting and raving that Queen Elizabeth was “a heretic” and that he “intended to go to London and assassinate her” (Wood. Pt. 1, 50:19). Eventually word of this tirade got back to London and the Queen and she turned to her trusted friend in Stratford, Sir Lucy, for help in the matter. Sir Lucy issued a warrant for the arrest of Summerville, Edward Arden, their wives and their children. They were all rounded up and brought to London where they were interrogated and tried for treason; and although there was never any concrete evidence of any wrongdoing they were all sentenced to death.

The next few years of Shakespeare’s life are a mystery and most scholars can’t agree as to where Shakespeare was and what exactly he was up to. Wood believes that Shakespeare ended up at Horton Tower in Lancaster where he worked as a teacher for Sir Bernard under the alias of “William Shakeshaft” (Wood. Pt. 1, 1:00:16). Despite the uncertainty of this period in Shakespeare’s life we do know that he must have made visits back to Stratford and his family from time to time because in 1585 Anne gave birth to

twins Hamnet and Judith. The next year, however, brought more shame and disgrace to the family when Shakespeare's father simultaneously suffered bankruptcy and dismissal from the town council. Then in the summer of 1587 things took a turn for the better and Shakespeare's fortune forever changed. According to historical documentations, while in Oxfordshire, two actors of the acting troupe *The Queen's Men*, William Nell and John Tome, got into a heated argument and Nell was slain. It was during this time, as the company passed through Stratford, one actor short, that most scholars believe Shakespeare joined up with *The Queen's Men*, Queen Elizabeth's own acting company. This would prove to be a huge influence on Shakespeare's life. The company "toured relentlessly" and were "set up by the government as a propaganda tool/ to prepare the nation for war" (Wood Pt. 2, 1:17:20). It was here that Shakespeare was first exposed to the old play of King Lear and a version of Richard III and it was this troupe's plots that would serve as a base foundation for his own plays. It was during this same transition in Shakespeare's life that Mary, Queen of Scots, was beheaded for her implications in a plot to overthrow Elizabeth. Shakespeare was only 23.

Then in 1588, while the troupe was in Plymouth, Shakespeare and *The Queen's Men* found themselves right in the middle of war and the very making of England's history as the Spanish Armada and the English navy went toe to toe in an all out assault. This war would prove to be England's finest hour. They were out numbered and out gunned but thanks to the wind and the English fire ships the victory fell to England and Phillip's Spanish Armada was defeated by the English navy. Although military struggles with Spain continued to rage on well into 1700's, the utter annihilation of the Spanish fleet solidified England as a dominant naval power and reasonably established

Elizabeth's protestant regime. This was a defining moment in English history, the culmination of 50 years of religious turmoil. England's confidence boomed and every aspect of its society seemed to flourish, especially professional theatre. Elizabeth's reign, however, was not an easy one and this upsurge of national and social growth forever burdened her with concerns of rapid economic change, serious food shortages and outbreaks of the plague. Near the end of 1588 it is believed that Shakespeare and *The Queen's Men* arrived back in London, "the very forge and working house of thought" according to Shakespeare, and it was here that Shakespeare struck out on his own to pursue his own path, writing (Wood. Pt. 2, 1:21:58).

Shakespeare took up residence in Bishop's Gate near the district of Shoreditch, roughly a mile north of where James Burbage built the first professional public theatre, *The Theatre*, in 1576. When Shakespeare arrived, London had just entered the age of the University Wits, a time of great theatrical revolution, and the lead poet (playwright) was Christopher Marlowe. This was the beginning of an age of greatness for English theatre. "Interest at universities and schools expanded beyond classical drama to plays on English history and recent Italian works and the result was a successful blend of classical and medieval devices with compelling stories drawn from many sources" (Brockett 110). The wits like Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd began to write for professional troupes and the public stage, bringing together for the first time learned and popular audiences. When Shakespeare began writing poets had to compete for the audience's attention with other forms of entertainment such as bear baiting, gambling and even executions. Theatrical interests in England had recently shifted toward historical plays, and with English history as one of his favorite subjects, Shakespeare chose for his first

three plays a series of histories, Henry VI (parts 1-3). They are thought to have been written between the years of 1590-1597 and were the most popular series of plays of their time. By the 1590's, English theatre had reached a Golden Age and Shakespeare was in the lead having followed the success of his trilogy with a rendition of Richard III, the bloody and violent play Titus Andronicus and two comedies; The Comedy of Errors and The Two gentleman of Verona a play wherein Shakespeare borrows the famous comic, Tartan's, dog bit. Although he was gaining popularity as a writer some critiques attacked Shakespeare as a cocky, young upstart mainly because these were the times of the great university wits and Shakespeare never even completed grammar school.

This was not exactly the best time to be a writer in London. In 1593 writers were being prosecuted for treasonable writing and no one, not even Christopher Marlowe, one of the Queen's personal spies, was safe. By the end of the year "two printers were executed for publishing seditious books and the playwright Thomas Kyd was put to the wrack" (Wood. Pt. 2, 1:43:31). Marlowe on the other hand, who had entered the trade of counterfeiting in preparations to join the side of the Catholics, was murdered by a fellow spy. The number one target at the time was a poet named Robert Southwell, a distant cousin of Shakespeare's. Southwell was under heat for a recent manifesto he had written called St. Peter's Complaint. In this document Southwell put the poet's of the age to task on their duty as poets which was, in his opinion, to glorify God. The Queen scoured the countryside in search of Southwell who was eventually betrayed and handed over to Richard Topcliffe, the Queen's personal torturer. In the end Southwell was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, Marble Arch, for his manifesto which was, interestingly enough, dedicated to his most "loving cousin, W.S." (Wood. Pt. 3, 11:49).

Later that same year the plague hit London and with the Black Death came the closing of the theatres. Shakespeare, now out of work, began writing poetry for profit. His patron was the Earl of Southampton for whom he wrote and dedicated Venus and Adonis. This was to be Shakespeare's first published work. Then in 1594 Shakespeare made one of the best possible business decisions he could have made and joined up with Richard Burbage and his company, *The Chamberlain's Men*, at *The Theatre* under the patronage of Lord Chamberlain Hunsdon. It was with this group and at this time that he wrote Love's Labour's Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream and possibly his most beloved tragedy, Romeo and Juliet. Happiness and success were short lived, however, because in 1596 Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, age eleven, died. This was a time of great pain and confusions for Shakespeare. He bought an extravagant new house for his family back in Stratford and obtained a coat of arms for his father officially making himself and his family nobility. Shortly after this Shakespeare returned to London, where in 1597, the theatres were again closed on grounds of sedition. This time Shakespeare retreated to Whilton to write more poetry. Here at Whilton we begin to see just how angry, hurt and distraught he was by the loss of his only son through the writing of some of his more famous sonnets. Most of the sonnets Shakespeare wrote while in residence at Whilton, such as sonnet 18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (Sonnet 18, p. 1587), are about the love and loss of a man. When Shakespeare returned again to London he moved to Southwark in order to evade a tax bill and disputes with *The Theatre's* landlord. At this point in his life it is suspected that Shakespeare began having an affair with a, "dark lady" (Wood. Pt. 3, 26:27). This is a very likely assumption supported by the fact that there were some recent newcomers to London at this time: dark skinned, Venetian Jews.

And again, some of Shakespeare's own sonnets written at about this time, sonnets 127-152 (Sonnets), speak of just such a woman, sonnet 128 in particular. Wood and other scholars seem to believe that this "dark lady" was Emilia Lanier or Aemilia Lanyer of the Bassano Family (Wood. Pt. 3, 28:34). It was during these years of his life in which he wrote Richard II, Henry IV Part I and more interestingly The Merchant of Venice, which happens to be about a Venetian Jew.

1599 was a capstone year for William Shakespeare and the history of theatre. On June 12th, William Shakespeare and *The Chamberlain's Men*, dismantled *The Theatre*, and moved it across the river to the Southbank where it was reassembled as *The Globe*; and all this in only four days while their landlord was away on holiday. The next few years were very profitable, happy times for Shakespeare, who was now a major shareholder in his own theatre, but trouble soon reared its head once more. By the 1600's Queen Elizabeth's power had waned. She was tired, old, weak and heirless; and the nation was anxious for a more suitable monarch to assume power. Then on February 7th, 1601, the Earl of Essex approached Shakespeare's company and asked them to perform the play Richard II and to add in a scene that was normally exempt for its seditious nature. At first the company refused, but when plied by Essex's offer of extra pay they agreed. The company performed the play that night, with the illegally added scene. Essex so desired that the play be presented with this specific scene because it would send a very specific message to the Queen, "a monarch who had lost the trust of the people could legitimately be deposed" (Wood. Pt. 3, 34:57). The next day Essex intended to have usurped the throne, but his followers dispersed and his attempt failed.

Essex and his fellow conspirators, including Shakespeare's old acquaintance Southampton, were rounded up and charged with high treason. Shakespeare and his company were likewise brought in and rigorously interrogated for their actions. However, since the company had technically not done anything wrong they were fined and released, but not without performing the play again before the Queen herself the night before Essex was executed. Some time later, while going over historical records with her biographer William Lombard, the Queen spotted the name King Richard. "I am Richard the second," she said, "know ye not that? This tragedy hath been played forty times in open streets and playhouses. In those days farce and arms did prevail, but know the wit of the fox is everywhere and scarcely a faithful or virtuous man is to be found" (Wood. Pt. 3, 40:12). Elizabeth knew what her nation thought of her.

Later that same year a new threat would rise to challenge the popular norm of theatre, acting troupes of boys; and the War of the Poets began. On one side were William Shakespeare and the adult acting troupes and on the other were men like Ben Johnson with his boy troupes and his plush indoor theatre at the Black Friars. The introduction and novelty of such troupes, with indoor facilities, somewhat controllable light sources and plays such as Poetaster, were a serious danger to the livelihood of the adult troops. Shakespeare's retaliation to such nonsense was Twelfth Night and Hamlet, the latter is considered to be his masterpiece. These plays retaliated against the boy troupes in subtle and not so subtle ways and with the genius of Hamlet the war was won. Also, during roughly this same time period, social and political attitudes were boiling over race disputes. It seems that the government was on the verge of "expelling all black

people from England” (Wood. Pt. 3, 50:35). Interestingly enough, it seems Shakespeare drew inspiration from this too, because it was about this time that he wrote Othello.

Then in March of 1603, after 45 years on the throne, Queen Elizabeth passed away and with her death came the end of the Tudor line. Having left no heir to the throne, the power of the crown now fell to Elizabeth’s nephew James, King of Scotland. James himself was Protestant but his wife was a devout Catholic. He was a lover of artists and intellectuals. He “fancied himself a philosopher prince/ he’d written books and he valued poets” and when he assumed the throne whispers began to circulate of a “Golden Age” and a “united Britain with old quarrels left behind” (Wood. Pt. 4, 59:27). With James’ ascension to the throne came a rise in stature for Shakespeare and *The Chamberlain’s Men* when James appointed them to serve as his personal troupe, dubbing them *The King’s Men*. When James arrived in London to assume power he and his entourage passed through a series of 70 foot triumphant archways especially erected for the occasion. James further honored the company during this procession by appointing a select few of them, including Shakespeare, to hold his canopy as his royal ushers. These were promising times indeed for all of England, but unfortunately, within two years of James’ rule, social and religious tensions were once again on the rise and the hopes of a Golden Age with religious freedoms began to fade.

“Remember, remember the 5th of November, the Gunpowder Treason and Plot. I know of no reason why the Gunpowder Treason should ever be forgot” (Guy Fawkes Night). On November 5th, 1605, a group of Catholic conspirators, led by Guy Fawkes, attempted what Wood refers to as, a “Jacobean 9-11” (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:09:40). Their intention was to pack the cellars of Parliament with the government’s own gunpowder

and to blow it up. The plan was foiled and the conspirators were rounded up and executed. King James believed that divine will had allowed him to foil the plot and proclaimed that “We don’t need the papists now” (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:10:11). These were dangerous times in which to be a Catholic. Anti papist plays such as The Whore of Babylon and The Devil’s Contract began to pop up all across London, and once again Shakespeare drew upon these current events for inspiration and out of the fiasco came Macbeth. A year later the government began to control religion and implemented legislation requiring all citizens to participate in protestant Easter communion. Along with this governmental uprising against Catholicism came the rise in strength of the puritans who began their attempts to suppress theatre. In 1606, amidst religious turmoil, Shakespeare wrote King Lear. Most people believe this play to be a simple fairy tale about an old king whose foolishness destroys all. Wood believes, however, that Shakespeare wrote this play as a “spiritual commentary”, a portrait, “not of James,” but “of the times” and with it he intended to “catch the conscience of the king” (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:18:54-1:20:11). The main message Shakespeare was trying to get across was that “kings should live up to the ideals of a just Christian society”, but the argument fell on the deaf ears of James who felt that “kings are gods on earth and writers shouldn’t meddle with their deepest mysteries” (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:18:05-1:19:48).

In 1607, Shakespeare was blessed with a bit of personal happiness when his eldest daughter, Susanna, married Dr. John Hall, a Protestant Puritan. Time, however, waits for no man, and that very same week of the wedding, the *Diggers of Warwickshire*, 3,000 poor farmers, rose up in rebellion and marched in protest against wealthy land owners. The rebellion was quickly quelled and its leaders executed. Once again events served as

inspiration and out of the rebellion Shakespeare wrote his play Coriolanus. In 1608, Shakespeare and his company finally succeeded in achieving one of their long sought after goals and opened up a second (indoor) theatre in the old, abandoned Catholic monastery at Black Friars. This allowed the company to charge more for their plays and also gave them some minimal control over lighting. This second theatre quickly became their permanent home in the winter months and earned Shakespeare and the company a small fortune. This was a time of great experimentation for William Shakespeare who, like the other poets of the time, was being influenced by the convention of candle light, boy virtuosos and Italian inspired music. Unfortunately, nothing much of Shakespeare's work has survived from this period. All that remains is the sheet music and lyrics to one song from his play Cardenio. The play, which is more commonly referred to as the "Lost Black Friar's Play", was written in 1613 and was based on the exploits of Don Quixote (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:27:47).

With the transition of more and more acting troupes to indoor facilities came the elevation of the actor's status within the social order and actors, for the first time, began to intermingle with the upper echelon. In 1611, Wood says that "one of the shareholders of the 'New World Expedition' slipped" Shakespeare "a suppressed document" containing details about a shipwreck in the Bermuda's" and that it gave Shakespeare "the cue for his last solo play", The Tempest (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:31:07). Some scholars believe that this play is autobiographical, with the character of Prospero representing Shakespeare. This is a very likely assumption because by the fall of that year, just as Prospero had drowned his book, broken his staff and walked away from magic, Shakespeare had stopped writing and moved back to Warwickshire where he began

buying real estate. Shakespeare also made some real estate purchases in London as well. Of particular interest was a house he bought in the Black Friar's district. The *Cockpit Inn* resides there now, but in Shakespeare's time the house that sat there was known for its history as a Catholic safe house and came complete with a patchwork of underground tunnels. In 1613 he and Richard Burbage took on an "side line" job for the Duke of Rutland designing "impraiseos" for shields to be used in fantasy jousts (Wood. Pt. 4, 1:35:55). Later that year Shakespeare wrote his final play Henry VIII, which he referred to as *All is True*. The play chronicles the reformation of Henry and his split with the Catholic Church and eerily enough the trial that is depicted in the play "took place in the same Black Friar's Hall" where Shakespeare's theatre now resided (Wood).

In 1614 *The Globe* burned down during a performance of *Henry VIII* and was rebuilt by the shareholders. After the reconstruction, however, Shakespeare decided to sell his shares in the company and withdrew from the world of theatre for good. Shakespeare returned to Warwickshire and on St George's Day, April 23rd of 1616, at age 51 he died. Seven years later, in 1623, Shakespeare's friends (namely John Heminge and Henry Condell) gathered together all 37 of Shakespeare's plays and had them published together in the First Folio. It is because of the extraordinary efforts of these men that the magnificence of Shakespeare's work has survived and that Shakespeare, as Ben Johnson has said, is "not of an age, but for all time" (Bullen viii).

King Lear

King Lear is said to be “the most tremendous effort of Shakespeare as a poet (Ferguson 2).” Evidence of around one hundred and six variations of the Lear story can be found in various cultures spanning many generations and multiple such sources are said to have served as the inspiration for Shakespeare’s own unique version.

Shakespeare’s King Lear is argued to have been written between the years of 1603 and 1608 and its first performance is thought to be December 26th 1606.

- Arguments for a 1603 date originate from words in Edgar’s speeches which may derive from Samuel Harsnett’s “Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1605). However, Shakespeare’s Lear could have been written any time after this source and not necessarily in the same year.
- R. A. Foakes – In his Arden Shakespeare argues for a date of 1605-1606, because of [one of] Shakespeare’s sources “The True Chronicle History of King Leir” was not published until 1605. Close correspondence between [the two] suggest that [Shakespeare] may have been working from a text.
- Frank Kermode – In the Riverside Shakespeare, considers the publication of Leir to have been a response to performances of Shakespeare’s already-written play; noting a sonnet by William Strachey that may have verbal resemblances with Lear, Kermode concludes that 1604-1605 seems the best compromise.
- The latest it could have been written is 1606 because the Stationer’s Register notes a performance on Dec. 26th 1606 (King Lear).

The exact year is of much debate because during the first quarter of the seventeenth century multiple versions appeared in print. The first version to appear was the 1608 printing of M. William Shak-speare:

“His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters. With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assured humor of Tom of Bedlam.”

This version was a “quarto or pocket-sized book known today as ‘Q1’” (Mowat lvi). The Q1 is quite remarkable in that hundreds of its verse lines are horribly disjointed or

arranged in prose form and conversely some of its prose is written as verse. Moreover, as the Q1 was being printed it underwent drastic corrections resulting in different copies which contain all together different interpretations. In 1619 the Q1 underwent a second printing resulting in the second quarto or Q2. The Q2, although printed with some of its own distinctive errors, is essentially just a reprint of Q1 with numerous alterations and adjustments. The Q2 was illegally printed with the exact same title and date as Q1; and the two printings so closely resemble one another that the difference and true date of the Q2 was not determined until the beginning of the twentieth century.

A third version appeared in 1623 in the collected works of Shakespeare known as the First Folio and is referred to as F. "Entitled simply, The Tragedie of King Lear, it contains over 100 lines that are not in Q1, however, F lacks about 300 lines (including a whole scene, 4.3) that are present in Q1; and the Q1 and F also differ from each other in their readings of over 800 words" (Mowat lvii). Interestingly enough, the two versions, as different as they are, share such a close relation in terms of punctuation that some argue that the F was either compiled from annotations taken from Q1 and then enhanced with the passages distinctive only to the F; or that it was based on a manuscript of collected references from Q2. In the early eighteenth century, editors, "beginning with Alexander Pope," began to combine the Q1 and the F into a version known as a "conflated text" (King Lear). Since the 20th century, however, editors have begun to prefer the F over the Q1 believing that, "the Q1 text originated either in a shorthand transcription of a performance or in a reconstruction of the play by actors who depend on their memories of their parts" and that the F is believed "to have come down to us without the intervention of shorthand or memorial reconstruction" (Mowat lx). A

recently developed theory has gained the Q1 some favor arguing that it was compiled straight from Shakespeare's own manuscript and that F was prepared for print by another dramatist after Shakespeare retired. A third theory suggests that Q1 and F are two entirely different versions of the same play and that they should never be combined into a single edition. Those who support the latter believe the Q1 to have come directly from Shakespeare's manuscripts and that the F is a revised version made after the Q1 printing. "The evidence upon which [these theories] are based is questionable and we become more skeptical about ever identifying with any certainty how the play assumed the forms in which it was printed" (Mowat lxi).

Some scholars present Shakespeare as a man who was greatly concerned with the issues of his time and that some of his plays (such as Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, and King Lear) echo the current events at the time they were written. *Lear*, for its deep examination of treason, is thought to have been inspired by the recent trials of the Earl of Essex in 1601 and Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603, for which they stood accused of high treason. These trials were "two of the most famous trials in English history" and for the "people of London" they served as a "thorough course of instruction" on the subject of high treason (Buckley 88). Buckley further speculates that it is very likely that Shakespeare would have been among those in attendance at the trial because the Earl of Essex was his close friend and patron.

Shakespeare was notorious for borrowing the elements for his scripts from various other sources and *Lear* is no exception. The *Lear* source material is thought to have been drawn from folk lore, history, contemporary poetry and drama. Possible sources include: *A mirror for Magistrates* (1574) by John Higgins, *The Malcontent*

(1604) by John Marston, *The London Prodigal* (1605), *Montaigne's Essays translated into English* by John Florio (1603), *A Historical Description of Iland of Britain* by William Harrison, *Remaines Concerning Britain* (1606) by William Camden, *Albion's England* (1589) by William Warner and *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostuers* (1603) by Samuel Harsnett. Shakespeare's Lear, is (at its base) a "literary variant of a common fairytale in which a father rejects his youngest daughter for a statement of her love that does not please him" (King Lear). However, more specific sources are thought to have been the main fodder for the play. Susan Ferguson asserts that Lear is, in essence, a Cinderella story and that almost all societies have their versions of such an "outcast heroine" (2). It is in a specific variation of these stories known as *Cap O' Rushes* that the King Lear judgment is found and the Corsican folklore of *Marie la Fille du Roi* holds strikingly similar parallels with Shakespeare's Lear. The character of King Lear appears in Celtic legend and again in Scandinavian myth as Hler, but neither resembles the story of Shakespeare's Lear and the Celtic mythology makes no mention of his family. Any or all of these could have served as source material for Shakespeare, but it is most commonly acknowledged that he tended to use "English history for the sources of his plays (Ferguson 5)," specifically Holinshed's Chronicles. In the chronicles there exists the story of *King Leir* along with a foot note referencing, Gal. Mon., the alias of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Ferguson asserts that it is very likely that Shakespeare would have looked up this reference and it would have led him to Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*; where in chapter XI of book II he would have found the story of *King Lear*. Monmouth's Lear so closely resembles Shakespeare's, point by point, that it is believed to have served as the main source of inspiration and that the subplot of Gloucester and his

two sons was taken from Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. Further evidence of the influence of the *Arcadia* on Shakespeare's work can be found in both Hamlet and The Winter's Tale. The "principal innovation Shakespeare made to this story was the death of Cordelia and Lear at the end" (King Lear).

The play was poorly received during the seventeenth century because its theme of a fallen monarchy too closely resembled current events; and it was entirely suppressed in the late 18th early 19th centuries by the British government who felt that a play about an insane king was distasteful and touchy with the insane George III on the throne. Shakespeare's tragic ending has always been much criticized and sometime after the Restoration and well into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, theatre practitioners, such as Nahum Tate, began to rewrite and alter its dark and depressing conclusion. In 1681, Tate "gave the play a happy ending, with Edgar and Cordelia marrying, and Lear restored to kingship. The fool was eliminated all together, and Arante, a confidant for Cordelia, was added" (King Lear). It was this sort of happily-ever-after ending which replaced Shakespeare's until the nineteenth century when social attitudes began to shift and society began to acknowledge the merit of the play's original ending for its extensive insight to human nature and the ideas of suffering and kinship. Slowly Shakespeare's ending made its way back to the stage. In 1823, Edmund Kean made a small stride and began restoring the play to its original form and in 1834 William Charles Macready eliminated the editions made by Tate, but it was Samuel Phelps in 1845 that is said to have fully restored the play. "Since the nineteenth century it has been regarded as one of Shakespeare's supreme achievements and it is among the most

popular of his plays to be staged in the twentieth century with Peter Brook's 1962 production being considered the most famous" (King Lear).

Hodge Script Analysis

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental facts

1. Geographical location, including climate

King Lear takes place at various locations across Great Britain. The climate is mostly temperate and is moderated by prevailing southwest winds from the North Atlantic Current. The weather is overcast three-quarters of the time and natural disasters include flooding and winter windstorms (Central Intelligence Agency).

2. Date: year, season, time of day

For our production the play takes place during the Napoleonic era, sometime between 1799 and 1815. The season is unspecified, but a great storm takes place during the course of the play so I would speculate that it is during the spring or summer storm season, possibly even during the winter as winter windstorms are typical in the region. The time of day is varying throughout.

3. Economic environment

The kingdom is in a secure economical state and times are good, so much so that Lear intends to divide his kingdom into three parts and to marry off his three daughters with the large expanses of land and power serving as their dowries. This is not a play that is particularly concerned with issues of economy.

4. Political environment

King Lear is, however, a play very much concerned with politics. This is evident in the very first lines of the play in the conversation between Kent and Gloucester;

Kent: "I thought the king had more affected the Duke

of Albany than Cornwall?”

Gloucester: “It did always seem so to us, but now in
the division of the kingdom, it appears not which
of the Dukes he values most,” (I. i. 1-5)

and Lear’s line, “we have this hour a constant will to publish our daughters’ several dowers, that future strife may be prevented now...” implies that trouble is brewing in the kingdom as to who should rule if Lear steps down and that Lear is attempting to quell such fires before they begin. One of the most political aspects is Lear’s plan to determine which of his daughters will get the choicest piece of the kingdom as their dowry, the love test. What is more political and egomaniacal than Lear asking his children which of them “does love us most” (I. i. 56) and to reward the one with the greatest love for him the biggest prize? Moreover, Lear plays up these politics between the sisters by showing his preference for his “joy” (I. i. 91), Cordelia, by offering her a “third more opulent” (I. i. 95) dowry.

At the start of the play the political pecking order is very clear: Lear is the king and everyone else is his subject, but Lear’s decision to divide his kingdom, both in land and power, opens the door to chaos and confusion as to who supersedes who in authority. Lear says that he wishes to “shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburdened crawl toward death” (I. i. 41-43) and that “now we will divest us both of rule, interest of territory, cares of state” (I. i. 54-55). Lear is saying all this with the intention of awarding his favorite daughter, Cordelia, and her husband, be it France or Burgundy, control of the kingdom. However, when Cordelia’s answer to the love test, is found lacking Lear is at a loss. He becomes enraged. He banishes Cordelia and says to Albany and Cornwall “I do invest you jointly with my

power, preeminence, and all the large affects that troop with majesty/only we shall retain the name and all th' addition to a king" (I. i. 146-152). Essentially, Lear is granting Albany and Cornwall all the shows or "troops" (I i. 148) of a king and asking them to deal with the stresses of decision making, but retaining the actual title and power of rule for himself. Division, in many forms, is one of the play's strongest themes and this division of state is the main political issue of the play. So much so, that it becomes the driving factor for all of the conflicts that follow.

Aside from this main political issue there is Lear's political move of banishing Kent, on pain of death, for contradicting his decision to disown and disinherit Cordelia. Kent uses this banishment, however, as an opportunity and parlay's it to Lear's advantage by sneaking back into Lear's services in disguise. Although Cordelia's marriage and dowry could be said to be an economical issue there are also some strong political issues surrounding them. The King of France and the Duke of Burgundy, two men of substantial power, have been vying for Cordelia and the dowry Lear promised with her. So when Lear refuses to give Cordelia her dowry he has, in essence, insulted and lied to these two prominent men and wasted their time and efforts. This is a political faux pas' that will have serious political repercussions when Cordelia and the King of France return with an army.

Aside from this main point of political strife there is also the struggle between the two sisters, Regan and Goneril, as they subtly vie for power of the kingdom each acting unabashedly as though they are in sole command. Likewise, their husbands, Cornwall and Albany, have their own quarrel raging over control of the kingdom. The four of them work their own angle completely oblivious and separate of one another with no familial

or marital loyalties. Lastly there is the political game in which Edmund plays; first within the ranks of his own family as he villainously subverts his brother Edmund to obtain his title and lands and then his father's, eventually becoming interwoven into the main power struggle for the kingdom.

5. Social environment

Again, this play does not really concern itself with social issues. It is more a play focused on political affairs of state. One aspect that is particularly social, however, is Edmund's illegitimacy. Edmund's bastardry is seen as a social stigma. It socially restricts Edmund from pursuing his goals in life. He is not seen as socially equal and therefore is not entitled to the same benefits that are rightfully Edgar's in accordance to the laws and customs of society regarding birthright.

6. Religious environment

There is a strong element of religion within the play and, like the strongest theme of the play; it is an element of division. The two sides of the religious coin in King Lear are: the Christian's who follow the laws and customs of society and the Pagans or Atheists or what you will that follow nature. The Christianity side is manifested in Lear, Kent, Gloucester and Edgar but most prominently in Cordelia. While the heathen side, is seen in Regan and Goneril but most especially in Edmund. Oddly enough, the Fool seems to be the fulcrum point between the two sides of the religion scale as he equally represents both sides.

B. Previous Action -- underline all lines that refer to incidents that happened prior to the start of the play

King Lear has called his court to session in order to determine which one of two suitors, the Duke of Burgundy or the King of France, will take the hand and dowry of his

youngest daughter Cordelia? Lear also intends to reveal a “darker purpose” (I. i. 37) to the meeting. Tiered with age and responsibility, Lear wishes to “shake all care and business from our age while we unburdened crawl towards death conferring them on younger strengths” (I. i. 41-41) and has split his territory into three parts; which he then intends to give to each of his three daughters: Goneril (the eldest), Regan (the middle child) and Cordelia (the youngest). Furthermore, he intends to give the largest part to the daughter that “loves us most” (I. i. 56) and he believes that daughter to be Cordelia.

C. Polar Attitudes -- the attitudes of the principal character as they are at the start of the play

Edmund has a chip on his shoulder. He is an illegitimate child who has been sent away for nine years and denied everything he feels he rightfully deserves. He is every bit as noble and full of quality as his brother Edgar, but the laws and customs of society hinder his advancement. Furthermore, his father has constantly belittled him and has personally denied him the rights he wishes for. I believe that Edmund has been scheming and devising all the years he has been away as to how he can obtain advancement. Moreover, I believe that the letter he forges to frame his brother was not written on the spur of the moment, but meticulously crafted as a means to his desired end and when Gloucester tells Kent that he intends to send Edmund away again Edmund has no choice, but to put into motion the plans he has made. He is angry and hurt by the years of being without the love of a family and by the stigma of his bastardy.

II. Dialogue

A. Choice of words -- everyday or formal? long or short?

Edmund has had the benefit of schooling. He is well spoken and his words are very formal. His words do tend to be few and well-chosen when amongst other people

but in private his speeches become freer and longer and he is more outspoken. His words become filled with emotion and range from crude to philosophical. He is technically nobility.

B. Choice of phrases and sentence structure

Being as the play is a work of Shakespeare the structure of the language is iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets.

C. Choice of images -- does the character use images which evoke emotion? visuals?

Edmund's words are full of emotion, of hurt and frustration and thus evoke strong emotional images. The visuals of his speeches are often very sexual in nature.

D. Choice of peculiar characteristics -- dialect?

Edmund has no particular vocal characteristics other than perhaps a sense of elevated elocution, due to his schooling. I have toyed with the idea of Edmund speaking with a stutter, only when he is around other people, as a means of lulling others into a false sense of security.

E. The sound of the dialogue -- does the character use "hard" sounding words or soft sounding?

Edmund's words tend to be soft when he is around other people, but harsh and brazen when he is alone.

F. Structure of lines and speeches -- how does it support the delivery of the subtext?

The structure of Edmund's lines and speeches are again based on whether or not he is alone. When he is in the company of others his lines are often written with dripping subtext masked in well bred mannerisms, but when he is alone his lines are blunt and to the point with little to no doubt of their meaning or his true intent.

III. Dramatic Action -- Break down the play into workable units of action. Sometimes you can find a break where an entrance or exit occurs, while at other times it is a change in subject. A one-act play typically has between 6-15 units, but not always.

Script work.

A. Title the units -- number the units in the scene or play and give a nominative phrase as a title for each unit.

Script work.

B. Verbing -- express the action of each line (speech) by using the initial of each character followed by a present tense verb.

Example: N pleads

Script work.

C. Summary of the Action -- summarizes the action of the play.

Ball Analysis

Stasis

King Lear has called his court to session in order to determine which one of two suitors, the Duke of Burgundy or the King of France, will take the hand and dowry of his youngest daughter Cordelia? Lear also intends to reveal a “darker purpose” (I. i. 37) to the meeting. Tiered with age and responsibility, Lear wishes to “shake all care and business from our age while we unburdened crawl towards death conferring them on younger strengths” (I. i. 41-42) and has split his territory into three parts; which he then intends to give to each of his three daughters: Goneril (the eldest), Regan (the middle child) and Cordelia (the youngest). Furthermore, he intends to give the largest part to the daughter that “loves us most” (I. i. 56) and he believes that daughter to be Cordelia.

ACT I SCENE I

Intrusion

Goneril and Regan embellish their love for their father while Cordilia, who truly does love her father the most, refuses to make a show of her love for her father. Outraged, Lear disowns and banishes Cordilia and gives Goneril’s husband, the Duke of Albany and Regan’s husband, the Duke of Cornwall Cordilia’s third to “digest” and with it they will share equal control of his state and powers. Lear calls for the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France.

- Lear’s follower, the Earl of Kent, steps in and attempts to reason with Lear.
- Lear banishes Kent on pains of death.
- The Duke of Burgundy and the King of France enter. Lear asks them which of the two still want her now that she’s disowned. Burgundy is confused but wants

his dowry as promised. He refuses Cordilia. The King of France tries to reason with Lear and when Lear refuses to listen the King of France professes his love for Cordilia as she is and accepts her hand.

- Lear announces that he will come and stay with Goneril and Regan for a month at a time. The court disperses and as she leaves Cordilia chides her sisters for their deceitful actions.

ACT I SCENE II

- Edmund, the Earl of Gloucester's bastard son, reveals his plot to take advantage of the situation in order to take his brother Edgar's land and title.
- Edmund gives Gloucester a fake letter, which he claims Edgar wrote and he found in his closet. The letter frames Edgar with the intent to usurp and murder their father.
- Gloucester wants to confront and chastise Edgar immediately, but Edmund convinces him to wait until he can arrange a meeting with Edgar, wherein Gloucester can spy on the conversation in order to determine Edgar's treachery for certain. Gloucester leaves.
- Edgar enters and Edmund baits him by telling Edgar that their father is angry with him. Edmund advises Edgar to hide in his (Edmund's) room until he can calm their father down and that if he must go abroad, go armed.

ACT I SCENE III

- Lear has been staying with Goneril. He has been running amuck with his 100 attendants and has struck one of Goneril's servants.
- While Lear is out hunting, Goneril, displeased with Lear's behavior, plots with her servant Oswald to turn Lear out of doors. Goneril writes to Regan to inform her of the situation and advises her to do the same. Kent, in disguise, overhears her plot and vows to aid Lear.
- Lear returns and Kent convinces Lear to make him his new servant.
- Lear calls for his fool and Goneril.
- The fool enters and chides Lear for his treatment of Cordelia.
- Goneril enters and casts Lear out. Lear curses her with barren infertility, admits for the first time that he wronged Cordilia then leaves.

ACT I SCENE V

- Lear sends Kent with letters to Gloucester to inform him of Goneril's treachery. Lear admits again his wrongs towards Cordelia.

ACT II SCENE I

- Edmund has a conversation with Curan wherein he learns that Cornwall and Regan have come to meet with Gloucester and that war is eminent between Cornwall and Albany.
- Edmund plots to use this to his advantage.
- Edmund goes to Edgar and advises him to run away because Gloucester intends to kill him believing that Edgar has said and done ill towards Cornwall. Edmund fakes a quarrel with Edgar and tells Edgar to flee.
- Edgar flees as Edmund calls out for help. Edmund cuts himself to make it look as though he has been wounded.
- Gloucester and others enter. Edmund tells Gloucester that he was wounded while trying to apprehend Edgar. Gloucester promises Edmund Edgar's lands and title.

- Cornwall and Regan arrive seeking guidance from Gloucester about the war and whether they should take Goneril's advice about Lear.
- Cornwall and Regan confer with Gloucester about Edgar's treachery. Gloucester tells them of Edmund's services in the matter. Cornwall offers Edmund a place in his services. They all exit.

ACT II SCENE II

- Kent overhears Regan and Cornwall's intentions toward Lear. Oswald enters Kent confronts and attacks him over his participation in the whole business.
- Gloucester, Edmund, Regan and Cornwall enter to see what all the commotion is about.
- Cornwall breaks it up and puts Kent in the stocks. Gloucester advises against this treatment because Kent is a messenger of Lear.

ACT II SCENE III

- Edgar enters. He is distraught by his sad state of affairs. He begins to suspect that something foul is afoot and decides that his best course of action would be to put on an "unusual vigilance" and to disguise himself as a poor, wretched beggar, Poor Tom.

ACT II SCENE IV

- Lear arrives to seek lodging with Regan and finds Kent in the stocks.
- Lear asks Kent what has happened. Kent explains, but Lear is dumbfounded. Furthermore, Kent reveals to Lear the intentions of Goneril, Regan and Oswald's hand in the business. The Fool again chides Lear and Lear goes in to confront Regan.
- Lear returns with Gloucester who says that Regan and Cornwall refuse to see him.
- Cornwall and Regan enter and set Kent free. Lear informs Regan of Goneril's treachery. Regan advises Lear to return to Goneril and to apologize. Lear refuses and curses Goneril.
- Goneril enters. Regan and Goneril ally themselves against Lear and advise him to dismiss his 50 attendants.
- Lear refuses and says that he'll just stay with Regan, but Regan refuses Lear saying she had not prepared for him and that she is not provided for 100 attendants. Regan asks that Lear dismiss all but 25 of his attendants.
- Lear contemplates and decides to go with Goneril and 50 attendants. Regan and Goneril chide Lear and ask him why he needs even one attendant. They both turn him out and advise Gloucester to do the same.
- A great storm begins and Lear begins to have a nervous breakdown.

ACT III SCENE I

- Kent, the Fool and Lear's attendants scatter to seek shelter while Lear roams ranting and raving at the storm.
- Kent finds a gentleman. Kent informs him of the troubles of Lear, the impending war between Cornwall and Albany, and a secret attack by the King of France. Kent sends him with a letter to the King and his ring for Cordilia to Dover.

ACT III SCENE II

- The Fool attempts to bring Lear out of the storm.
- Kent helps to convince Lear to take shelter in a nearby hovel. Lear concedes and confesses that he is losing his wits.

- The Fool speaks prophecy.

ACT III SCENE III

- Inside, Gloucester informs Edmund of the treachery towards Lear and that Regan and Cornwall have taken over his house to ensure that he won't help Lear himself. Gloucester informs Edmund of the secret forces from France and his intentions to help them. Gloucester asks Edmund to keep this knowledge quiet.
- Edmund decides to tell Cornwall.

ACT III SCENE IV

- Lear, Kent and the Fool arrive at the hovel. Lear sends the Fool in while he prays.
- The Fool rushes out of the hovel alarmed. He has discovered Edgar hiding within. Lear sees himself in Poor Tom and even thinks he's talking to a vision of himself.
- Gloucester comes out and asks Lear to come inside but Lear wants to continue talking with Edgar.

ACT III SCENE V

- Edmund informs Cornwall of Gloucester's treachery. Cornwall orders the capture of Lear and swears revenge and offers Edmund a place in his services.

ACT III SCENE VI

- Lear, in his mad delusion, holds court to discuss his daughters.
- Gloucester returns and tells them of Cornwall's plot to capture them all and suggests they flee to Dover.

ACT III SCENE VII

- Cornwall seeks to ally with Albany against France. He sends people after Gloucester and Lear's party and sends Edmund, now titled Earl of Gloucester, to assist Albany.
- Gloucester is captured and brought to Cornwall. Cornwall interrogates Gloucester and then plucks out one of Gloucester's eyes. Cornwall goes to pluck out Gloucester's second eye but one of Cornwall's servants steps in to stop him. Cornwall and the servant fight. The servant wounds Cornwall. Regan kills the servant. Cornwall rips out Gloucester's second eye.
- Gloucester calls out for Edmund and Regan informs Gloucester of Edmund's betrayal. Gloucester now realizes his fault and asks for forgiveness of Edgar. Gloucester is cast out and he asks an old man to lead him to the cliffs of Dover so he can end his life.

ACT IV SCENE I

- Gloucester comes across Edgar wondering the country side.
- Gloucester recognizes Edgar as Poor Tom the old beggar from the night before. Poor Tom reminds Gloucester of his son Edgar and so he asks if Edgar to lead him to the cliffs instead. Edmund agrees.

ACT IV SCENE II

- Edmund arrives at Goneril's and she makes him General of the army because she claims her husband Albany is a coward. Goneril makes advances toward Edmund.
- Albany enters and chides Goneril for her treatment of Lear.

- A messenger arrives with news that Cornwall has died from his wounds. The messenger also brings a letter to Edmund from Regan calling Edmund back. Goneril confesses her desires for Edmund and her jealousy toward Regan.
- The messenger informs Albany of Edmund's treacherous deeds. Albany swears revenge on Edmund.

ACT IV SCENE III

- Kent arrives at Dover to find that the King has returned home on urgent business and left Monsieur La Far in command.
- Cordelia, having learned of Lear's peril, sends some men and a doctor for Lear to be found.
- A messenger arrives warning of the approaching British army.

ACT IV SCENE IV

- Regan asks Oswald about the war and Edmund; and tells him that she will reward him well if he should find and kill Gloucester. Regan sends Oswald with tokens of her affection to Edmund.

ACT IV SCENE V

- Edgar leads Gloucester about the country side instead of to the cliffs and tricks him into thinking he jumped off the cliff and when Gloucester comes to Edgar asks like someone else.
- Lear wanders by. Gloucester recognizes him but Lear does not recognize him at first.
- The search party finds them and Lear flees.
- Edgar asks them about the war and he learns that the army has moved on but Cordelia remained behind for Lear.
- Oswald arrives and attempts to kill Gloucester but Edgar defends Gloucester and kills Oswald.
- Oswald asks Edgar to deliver letters to Edmund.
- Edgar reads the letters and discovers the plot on Albany's life.

ACT IV SCENE VII

- Lear is brought to Cordelia's camp with Kent. Kent reveals himself to Cordelia but asks her to keep it a secret.
- Lear confesses to not be in his right mind but recognizes Cordelia.
- A Gentleman tells Kent that Cornwall has died and that Edmund is General of the army.

ACT V SCENE I

- Edmund arrives and Regan interrogates Edmund as to whether he loves and has slept with Goneril.
- Goneril arrives and she and Regan argue over Edmund.
- Edgar arrives and gives letters to Albany and promises him that a champion will come if he calls for him.
- Edmund asks Albany to prepare for war and reveals his plot to deal with the affections of Goneril and Regan.

ACT V SCENE II

- Edgar returns to Gloucester and learns that Lear and Cordelia have been captured.

ACT V SCENE III

- Edmund sends Cordelia and Lear to prison then sends his captain after with a letter to have them killed.
- Albany asks for Cordelia and Lear. Albany confronts Edmund. Regan and Goneril defend him. Regan confesses her love for Edmund. Albany arrests Edmund for treason. Edmund refuses so Albany challenges Edmund to duel any man of his choosing. Edmund agrees.
- Albany discharges the army then reads the letter Edgar brought and calls for the champion.
- Edgar appears in disguise and fights Edmund. Edmund is mortally wounded.
- Albany reveals Goneril's letter and treachery. Edgar reveals himself.
- Albany asks Edgar to explain his strife. Edgar does and tells of Gloucester's death due to heartbreak.
- A messenger enters with news of Regan and Goneril's self demise.
- Kent arrives to save Cordelia and Lear. Edmund sends for their deaths to be stopped and repents. Edmund dies.
- Lear arrives carrying the dead body of Cordelia.
- Albany gives Edgar his due right back.
- Lear dies of grief

Return to Stasis/New Stasis

Edgar is crowned king and is now in command of the kingdom.

IV. Characters

Treat each character under the following headings:

A. Desire -- what do they want most?

What Edmund wants most of all is to be loved and accepted by Gloucester; and by society as an equal, but since he can't have that he wants power and status.

B. Will -- relative strength for obtaining the above

Edmund's will is quite strong and he will do anything to obtain his desired goal, even betray his family.

C. Moral Stance -- values, honesty, moral code

Edmund's morality and honor are virtually nonexistent. He loathes everything about the laws and customs of society and of religion.

D. Decorum -- describe the physical appearance

Edmund is in his mid to late twenties. He is fair skinned, lean, muscular, and somewhat tall (5' 9" pushing 6'). He is attractive and charming with wavy long hair and a light full beard.

E. Summary Adjectives -- summarize all of the categories above using only adjectives

Strong, attractive, muscular, intelligent, determined, cunning, suave, sophisticated, well-built, strapping, tough, amiable, pleasant, charismatic, polite, resolute, strong-minded, single-minded, dogged, indomitable, unwavering, cruel, brutal, malicious, spiteful, vindictive, pitiless, crude, sly, crafty, sneaky and shrewd.

F. Initial Character-mood-intensity at the scene opening expressed by:

1. Heartbeat: rate

Script work.

2. Perspiration: heavy, light, etc.

Script work.

3. Stomach condition

Script work.

4. Muscle tension

Script work.

5. Breathing: rate, depth

Script work.

V. Ideas

A. Meaning of the title -- what is the core meaning, or what is the play saying? Often an idea is expressed through a feeling -- what lies subliminally beneath the feeling?

Like any of Shakespeare's plays, King Lear is riddled with major themes: pain, suffering, sanity, human cruelty, poverty, grief, greed, lust, ambition, jealousy, love and

desire (both monetarily and for power); but the themes that prevail the most are those of old age, treason, nature, fate/fortune, astrology, familial bonds, sibling rivalry and the decay of social order. King Lear is about all of these, but most importantly, like all plays, it is about people, and most specifically it is about King Lear and the decay and disorder brought on by his actions.

In the play itself both Gloucester and Edmund sum up the play's themes in prophecy:

Gloucester

"These late eclipses in the sun and moon
portend no good to us... Love cools,
friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities muti-
nes; in countries, discord; in palaces; treason; and
the bond cracked 'twixt son and father." (I. i. 109-115)

Edmund

"I promise you, the effects he writes of suc-
ceed unhappily, as of unnaturalness between the
child and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of
ancient amities, divisions in state, menaces and
maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffi-
dences, banishment of friends, dissipation of co-
horts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what. (I. ii. 150-156)

B. Philosophical statements in the play -- cite actual quotations found in the script.
Pinpoint the line(s) that make direct reference to your
interpretation of it's meaning.

- "Which of you shall we say doth love us most..." (Lear – I. i. 56)
- "Nothing will come of nothing." (Lear – I. i. 99)
- "Come not between the dragon and his wrath" (Lear – I. i. 136)
- "The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft." (Lear – I. i. 160)
- "Be Kent unmannerly when Lear is mad." (Kent – I. i. 163)
- "My life I never held but as a pawn." (Kent – I. i. 175)
- "Though swear'st thy gods in vain." (Kent – I. i. 184)
- "Love's not love when it is mingled with regards that stands aloof from the entire point." (Albany – I. i. 275-277)
- "Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides, who covers faults at last with shame derides." (Cordelia – I. i. 325-326)
- "Tis the infirmity of his age." (Regan – I. i. 339)

- “Though, Nature, art my goddess. To thy law my services are bound.” (Edmund – I. ii. 1-2)
- “All this done upon the gad?” (Gloucester – I. ii. 26-27)
- “Old fools are babes again.” (Goneril – I. iii. 20)
- “Truth’s a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out...” (Fool – I. iv. 155-116)
- “Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?” (Fool – I. iv. 134-135)
- “Nothing can be made out of nothing.” (Lear – I. iv. 136-137)
- “...wise men are grown foppish and know not how their wits to wear, their manners are so apish.” (Fool – I. iv. 171-173)
- “Thou hast pared thy wit o’ both sides and left none i’ th’ middle.” (Fool – I. iv. 191-192)
- Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend...” (Lear – I. iv. 270)
- How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” (Lear – I. iv. 302-303)
- “Striving to better, oft we mar what’s well.” (Albany – I. iv. 369)
- “Fortune, good night. Smile once more; turn thy wheel.” (Kent – II. ii. 188-189)
- “Fortune, that arrant whore, ne’er turns the key to th’ poor.” (Fool – II. iv. 58-59)
- “Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following.” (Fool – II. iv. 78-80)
- “We are not ourselves when nature, being oppressed, commands the mind to suffer with the body.” (Lear – II. iv. 121-123)
- “Age is unnecessary.” (Lear – II. iv. 175)
- “Not being the worst stands in some rank of praise.” (Lear – II. iv. 295-296)
- “Allow not nature more than nature needs, man’s life is cheap as beasts.” (Lear – II. iv. 307-308)
- “...to willful men the injuries that they themselves procure must be their school masters.” (Regan – II. iv. 347-349)
- “No, I will be the pattern of all patience. I will say nothing.” (Lear – III. ii. 39-40)
- “I am a man more sinned against than sinning.” (Lear – III. ii. 62-63)
- “The younger rises when the old doth fall.” (Edmund – III. iii. 25)
- “The body’s delicate.” (Lear – III. iv. line 15)
- “Take heed o’ th’ foul fiend. Obey thy parents, keep thy word’s justice, swear not, commit not with man’s sworn spouse, set not thy sweet heart on proud array.” (Edgar – III. iv. 86-89)
- “Is man no more than this?” (Lear – III. iv. 109-110)
- “The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman.” (Edmund – III. iv. 151)
- “Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile that it doth hate what gets it.” (Gloucester – III. iv. 153-154)
- “As flies to wanton boys are we to th’ gods; they kill us for their sport.” (Gloucester – IV. i. 41-42)
- “Tis the time’s plague when madmen lead the blind.” (Gloucester – IV. i. 54)
- “Humanity must perforce prey on itself, like monsters of the deep.” (Lear – IV. i. 60-61)
- “I am even the natural fool, of fortune.” (Lear – IV. vi. 209-210)
- “...I am bound upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears do scald like molten lead.” (Lear – IV. vii. 52-54)

- “Men must endure their going hence even as their coming hither. Ripeness is all.” (Edgar – V. ii. 10-12)
- “The judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble, touches us not with pity.” (Lear – V. iii. 270-271)

C. Implications of the action -- given circumstances and dramatic action, help unfold characters until the summit, or idea, is reached. Determine how the characters' actions propel the play to the climax and ending. Consider how these actions are played in relationship to what idea or conclusion you wish the audience to reach.

Edmund's actions are an integral part of the play. Without them the subplot would have been entirely different. If Gloucester would have sent Edmund away, Albany, Goneril, Regan and Cornwall would still have fought over the kingdom and Gloucester would still have attempted to foil their plans (only this time with Edgar as his confidante maybe he would have succeeded); and then they would have restored Lear and Cordelia to power and the play would have ended happily-ever-after. However, due to Edmund's influence on the play's plot greater chaos and confusion abound and no less than six main characters die.

D. Consider each scene -- determine the purpose of each scene in the play. What idea is it trying to convey? How does it help the overall idea?

Act I Sc I – This scene is an introduction to the characters, their desires and their conflicts; and it is the catalyst which initiates the initial conflict from which all other events unfold.

Act I Sc II – This scene reveals Edmund's true nature and objective and it is the beginning of the subplot.

Act II Sc I – This scene allows Edmund the opportunity to solidify his villainous machinations and to gain further trust amongst his father and Cornwall.

Act II Sc II – This scene further reveals Edmund's success.

Act III Sc III – This scene provides Edmund with evidence against his father which he then reveals he intends to use as a means to supplant his father as he did his brother.

Act III Sc V – This scene gives Edmund the opportunity to betray his father and to obtain a higher rank and greater degree of trust with Cornwall.

Act IV Sc II – This scene is the initial spark of the love triangle between Edmund and the sisters and it opens a path to the crown for Edmund.

Act V Sc I – This scene demonstrates exactly how much power Edmund has by being in control of Cornwall's armed forces and it is the beginning of his undoing.

Act V Sc III – This scene shows Edmund's true desperation and lust for power and just how far he is willing to go to obtain all he can. Also it is the demise of evil and the triumph of good as both plots are resolved.

VI. Tempo -- Look back on each unit you have created within the play and designate a rate of speed to it, e.g.: slow, medium, fast...Graph (like a seismograph) the tempo of each unit. This way when you begin at rehearsal at unit 4, you will rehearse the scene at the correct tempo.

Script work.

VII. Moods -- After each unit, express the mood of the unit using an adjective.

Script work.

Elizabethan Dramatic Structure

During the Elizabethan era stage architecture took on a unique form which drastically affected dramatic structure. Elizabethans greatly “admired classic Greek and Roman architecture (Architecture)” and implemented its classic elements into their own structures, including theatres. James Burbage, along with his brother-in-law John Brayne, constructed the first Elizabethan theatre aptly named *The Theatre*. Burbage, who started out as a joiner, was extremely familiar with carpentry; however, he knew little when it came to architecture, so he hired Dr. John Dee to design the construction plans. Dee was more commonly known throughout England as a “magician and alchemist (Architecture),” but he had a vast knowledge of architecture backed by an extensive library of architectural references. Dee’s designs purposely incorporated many Greek and Roman influences resulting in a uniquely Elizabethan amphitheatre which closely resembled the Roman amphitheatre.

Dee designed a public outdoor theatre with an open-air arena exposed to the elements. The theatre consisted of eight to twenty-four sides arranged in a circular or octagonal shape measuring 100 feet in diameter and constructed from timber, stone (usually flint), and plaster. A “three to five foot (Architecture)” raised stage stood at one end of the arena and projected out into the middle of an open pit or yard with three tiers of thatched roof seating galleries surrounding it on three sides. There was one main entrance into the theatre and audience members could sit in the galleries or on stage; or they could stand in the pit. Overall capacity for the theatre was 1,500-3,000. The stage ranged from 20 feet wide and fifteen feet deep to forty-five feet wide and thirty feet deep and was supported by a series of pillars or trestles. The stage was constructed from wood

and usually covered with rushes with a built in trap door for special effects. At either end of the stage stood two massive Herculean pillars or columns which were used to support the thatched roof. The columns were fashioned from one large tree and painted to mimic marble. The roof of the stage was known as Heaven and was used as a storage space and also as a place for actors to hide from the audience. At the back of the stage was a decorative stage wall, a sort of frons scenea. The wall facilitated three doors, one stage left, one stage right and one in the center (the inner below), above which was a balcony (the upper above). The backstage area, the Tiring House, was used for actor's changing quarters and also for storage. Very little props or set pieces were ever used and the overall design of this stage structure allowed for a continually fluent, almost cinematic dramatic structure which was the characteristic of Elizabethan style of performance.

During the Elizabethan era Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote for two reasons: first to satisfy their audience, but most importantly for profit. There was, "considerable profit to be made in theatrical productions (Architecture)," and Elizabethan playwrights knew that in order to keep the profits rolling they had to produce quality plays; and like much of the influences of the time they drew upon the Greeks and Romans for their structure. Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights were considerably familiar with Greek and Roman play structure from their schooling and it is from Horace that they derived their concepts for a successful play. In his work, *Ars Poetica*, Horace outlines the perfect structure of a play:

"A play should not be shorter or longer than five acts if, once it has been seen, it wishes to remain in demand and be brought back for return engagements. Nor should any god intervene unless a knot show up that is worthy of such a liberator;

nor should a fourth actor strive to speak. Let the chorus sustain the role of an actor and the function of a man, and let it not sing anything between the acts that does not purposefully and aptly serve and unite with the action. It should favor the good and provide friendly counsel; it should control the wrathful and show its approval of those who fear to sin; it should praise modest meals, wholesome justice and laws, and peace with its open gate; it should conceal secrets and entreat and beg the gods that fortune return to the downtrodden and depart from the arrogant” (Hardison 13).

Although Elizabethan playwrights did away with the chorus and employed many actors past Horace’s recommended four; they adhered, for the better part, to the essence of this structure for their plays.

Elizabethan plays are comprised of five acts and are broken down into short episodic scenes with only the episodes prudent to the story being shown on stage and they consist of large casts with a wide range of well-rounded characters. The play’s point of attack is often introduced early in the story and all events flow chronologically.

According to Brockett notable characteristics include:

- Characters and situations clearly established in opening scenes.
- Action develops logically out of exposition.
- A number of plots usually interwoven, first proceeding somewhat independently but eventually coming together as denouement approaches so resolution of one leads to the other. Apparent diversity given unity!
- “Action normally encompasses months or years and occurs in widely separated places” (Brockett 112).
- Written for a non-illusionistic stage. Essentially placeless although locale is always specified in dialogue when important to the action.
- Major concern is for developing action in which time and place shift rapidly.
- “Tone may vary frequently from serious to comic” (Brockett 112).

Elizabethan plays were influenced by and fashioned on medieval concepts of morality and ethics allowing characters free will with a responsibility for the decisions they make. Dialogue is written in iambic pentameter and prose; and employs the conventions of poetic imagery and soliloquies.

Historical documentation of the era provides records of over a thousand players from this period. However, the “acting style of the Elizabethan performer can only be guessed at” (Brockett 119). Most scholars believe that the style was extremely formal and declamatory, based on the limited rehearsal periods, the nonrealistic quality of the scripts and staging conditions and the massive repertoires; but others argue that it was somewhat more realistic. Those who support this latter theory base their argument on Hamlet’s advice to the players, historical critiques of convincing performances by actors such as Burbage, the truthfulness of the human life as portrayed in the plays and the audience/actor proximity during performances. Whatever the style, actors were provided with only their lines (including a three-word cue); and typically had very short rehearsal periods before the performance of a new play. Scholars do agree that playwrights used a double casting system and that all female roles were played by young boys. Critical analyses from the period report that “many actors moved audiences with the power of ‘truth’ in their playing” but that only raises the question: “what is considered ‘truth in acting’” (Brockett 112)?

Edmund: A Traitor Among Treachers

Shakespeare's psychologically-complex villains are among the most frequently analyzed of theatrical characters and the bastard, Edmund, is certainly no exception. Critical analyses of Edmund are numerous and cover such topics of his character as his villainy and his delayed confession, but possibly the most widely debated inquiry on Edmund is the question of his treachery. In the last scene of act five Albany accuses Edmund of high treason and Edmund, after losing the trial-by-battle to determine his guilt, does indeed confess to the charges against him. Raymond Utterback argues that "Shakespeare has given the audience quite enough for all to know not merely that Edmund has betrayed in a general way those to whom he has obligations of loyalty, but also that in the strictest legal sense Edmund is indeed 'a most toad-spotted traitor'" (203). However, A. C. Buckley questions the "justness (87)" of the charges against Edmund and McNeir asks "against whom or in what manner Edmund could have committed high treason" (90)? These are interesting points to ponder because although Edmund does confess to treason he is not the only traitor in King Lear's court and the treason to which he confesses is not the treason for which he is being charged.

Treason, under both common law and the fundamental statutes of England during Shakespeare's time had roughly the same connotation; and according to "The Treason Act" (statute 25 Edw. III, State. 5, C. 2, as ratified by the 1350-1351 Parliament) treason is defined as:

"when a man doth compass or imagine the death of our lord the King, or of our lady his Queen or of their eldest son and heir; if a man do violate the King's companion, or the King's eldest daughter unmarried, or the wife of the King's eldest son and heir; if a man do levy war against our lord the King in his realm, or be adherent to the King's enemies in his realm, giving to them aid and comfort in the realm, or elsewhere; and if a man slea the chancellor, treasurer, or the King's

justices of the one bench or the other, justices in eyre, or justices of assise, and all other justices assigned to hear and determine, being in their places, doing their offices" (Treason).

To provide a modern perspective on the term, the New English Dictionary defines treason as:

Treason s. v. – High Treason or Treason Proper as distinguished from petit or petty treason, now usually punished as a felony, was “compassing or imagining the king’s death, or that of his wife or eldest son, violating the wife of the king or of the heir apparent, or of the king’s eldest daughter, adhering to the king’s enemies, or aiding them in or out of the realm, or killing the chancellor or the judges in the execution of their offices.

Based on either of these two definitions, when pondering the question of who committed treason in King Lear, it is apparent that Edmund should not be the only one; and certainly not the first to be accused of treason. According to Buckley, “we are confronted first of all with the difficulty of asserting just whom he [Edmund] would have committed treason against. Who after Lear’s resignation was entitled to wield the royal power” (89)? In act I scene I, Lear reveals his intentions to divide and disperse his kingdom, both in land and power, as his daughters’ dowries saying that he wishes to, “shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburdened crawl toward death” (I. i. 41-43) and that “now we will divest us both of rule, interest of territory, cares of state” (I. i. 54-55). Lear, “on more than one occasion,” (89 speaks of the portions of the divided kingdom as the daughters’ dowries; “a form of property that, at the time of Shakespeare, passed into the ownership of husbands” (Buckley 90). This would mean that after Lear’s resignation Cordelia and her husband, be it France or Burgundy, would be awarded full sovereign power over the kingdom, for it was to them that the largest portion was to go to. However, after Cordelia disappoints Lear with her answer to his love test, Lear tells Cornwall and Albany, “I do invest you

jointly with my power, preeminence, and all the large affects that troop with majesty/only we shall retain the name and all th' addition to a king" (I. i. 146-152). Lear has rashly decided not to give away the "title of king in dividing Britain" and is "quite specifically" reserving "the title and all its additions during his life" (Utterback 203). Essentially, Lear is granting Albany and Cornwall all the troops or prerogatives of a king, but retaining the actual title and power of rule for himself. This would mean that Lear, from the beginning to the end of the play, is actually the true and proper ruler; and that furthermore, based on their actions: Goneril, Regan, Cornwall and Albany are all guilty of treason well before Edmund.

Goneril and Regan waste no time in plotting against Lear and just as soon as they are alone they begin to confer of their plans to protect "what most nearly appertains"(I. i. 330) to them both. The sister's are offended by the "surrender" (I. i. 352) of Lear's will and they fear the "infirmity" (I. i. 339) of Lear's age, whom at the "best and soundest of his time hath been but rash" (I. i. 341-342). They believe that there will be "further compliment of leave-taking" (I. i. 351) between Lear and France due to Lear's "poor judgment" (I. i. 338) in casting off Cordelia "too grossly" (I. i. 335) and that they can expect the same "unconstant starts" (I. i. 347) from their father as that of "Kent's banishment" (I. i. 348). Regan suggests that they "shall further think of" (I. i. 354) the matter, but Goneril replies, "we must do something, and in the heat" (I. i. 355). This exchange between Goneril and Regan, although it does not compass or imagine Lear's death, is filled with treasonous intent to overthrow the king. Moreover, both sister's exhibit their belief that they possess sole royal authority. Goneril, when confronted with her incriminating letter by Albany in Act V Scene III, declares that "the laws are mine,

not thine . Who can arraign me for ‘t’ (V. iii. 189-190)? Likewise, Regan displays such arrogance in attempting to confer royal power onto Edmund by declaring him her husband. These maladies aside, both Goneril and Regan conspire to affairs with Edmund; and if they truly believed themselves to be the queens and their husbands the kings then their intended affairs, if manifested, would qualify as treasonous on the grounds that they would be willing participants in the violation of the king’s wife or companion.

Cornwall and Albany are guilty of treason as well on the grounds that they are levying war against one another to battle for control of the kingdom in which Lear is technically still the ruler. Cornwall and Regan test the boundaries of treason: first for the act of detaining Lear’s messenger and putting him in the stocks (a point which the disguised Kent himself alludes to); and secondly for their heinous attack on Lear’s advisor, Gloucester. Cornwall and Regan attack Gloucester on claims of treason believing that Gloucester is adhering to the king’s enemies, or aiding them in or out of the realm/ adherent to the King’s enemies in his realm and giving to them aid and comfort. This is ironic and treasonous on Cornwall and Regan’s part because they consider themselves to be the king and queen and are punishing Gloucester for helping the enemy, Lear, when Lear is the rightful king. The only thing Gloucester is guilty of is being a loyal servant. Buckley states that, “during the middle ages, the common law judges found men guilty of treason for killing a royal messenger,” so in this regard Edgar should also be considered guilty of treason for his slaying of Oswald (91).

The accusations of treason against Edmund are that he conspired with Goneril to

murder Albany and that he committed adultery with royalty. These charges are brought against Edmund two fold. First, Albany arrests Edmund for “capital treason,” (V. iii. 99) then Edgar adds to the charges telling Edmund “thou art a traitor, false to thy gods, thy brother and thy father, conspirant ‘gainst this high illustrious prince, and from th’ extremest upward of thy head to the descent and dust below thy foot, a most toad-spotted traitor” (V. iii. 161-166). Consequently, as Buckley explains, “offenses against the gods, as an ancient law-giver said, are the concerns of the gods and not of human courts” and that while “the injuries Edmund visited upon his brother and father were revolting to human nature and deserving of severe punishment,” neither can be considered high treason (91). The only allegations against Edmund that have any substance at all are those of his conspiring against the life of Albany and violating the king’s wife; but these charges, which are supported by their possession of Goneril’s letter “soliciting Edmund to kill Albany and become her bed-companion ,”are circumstantial at best (Utterback 202).

Cornwall, in Act 3 Scene 7, charges Edmund with the task of escorting Goneril back to Albany’s camp and when they are seen again en route to the camp, in Act 4 Scene 2, Goneril remarks that their “wishes on the way may prove effects” (IV. ii. 17-18). This exchange suggests that during their journey Goneril has solicited her desires towards Edmund. Goneril then begins to suggest that Edmund “venture” in his “own behalf” (IV. ii. 24) on some matter, but never finishes. These desires are mentioned again in the contents of the letter as well as in Edmund’s final soliloquy. It is clear that Goneril has spoken with Edmund of her desire to have Albany killed and that she wishes Edmund to do it and that the letter is a reinforcement of these desires. Sir Walter Raleigh

stood trial, in 1603, for treason and was charged with “conspiring to kill the king, to raise a rebellion to change religion, and to subvert the government; but all that was actually proven was that he had listened to [a plan] to kill James I and place Arabella Stuart on the throne and that he had been offered a bribe, which was never paid, by the Spanish government to act as its spy in England” (Buckley 89). Raleigh’s listening was found to be treasonable on the basis that it encompassed the imaging of the death of the king. He was found guilty and sentenced to death, but James I reduced the sentence to life imprisonment. The contents of Goneril’s letter and Edmund’s mere listening to Goneril’s solicitations could be considered incriminating evidence and treason. Certainly if Edmund were to comply with the requests of Goneril’s letter he would be in violation of the statute, but since Edmund never received the letter and never knew of its contents they cannot unequivocally prove Edmund’s guilt of treason. Moreover, Edmund, in his final soliloquy, specifically renounces any intention of killing Albany.

Edmund does admit that he was “contracted” (IV. iii. 270) to both sisters, but there is no conclusive evidence that either affair ever came to fruition. An examination of the text reveals that Albany’s death was a prerequisite to the affair with Goneril and that, Edmund; when asked of an affair by Regan, three separate times, denies it. Furthermore, as Buckley asserts “we may well believe that the unconcealed eagerness of the two women was in itself an indication that Edmund has not yet entered into an immoral relationship with either of them” (93).

Buckley believes “it is well for the case of Albany and Edgar” that the charges against Edmund were submitted to a trial by a wager of battle and not to the deliberation of the courts; because “had it been thus submitted, the charge would have been thrown

out,” on the basis that their evidence, being of so circumstantial a nature, would have been insufficient in proving Edmund’s guilt under the statute (91). Although the practice of a trial by battle had almost entirely ceased by Shakespeare’s time, its results were still considered legally binding. Therefore, “Edmund’s loss of the battle,” as Utterback concludes, “is a formal indication of his guilt,” besides the fact, Edmund confesses (202). Goneril attempts to dispute the results of the fight proclaiming that, “This is practice Gloucester. By th’ law of war, thou was not bound to answer an unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquished, but cozened and beguiled” (V. iii. 181-184). Goneril’s point is technically valid and Buckley hesitates to accept the battle’s results as absolute and legally binding, however, the fact remains that Edmund waived these rights, “in wisdom I should ask thy name, but since thy outsides look so fair and warlike, and thy tongue some say of breeding breaths/by rule of knighthood I disdain and spurn,” (V. iii. 170-174) so whether he is truly guilty or not, by agreeing to fight an unknown in the battle he has agreed to accept the results as conclusive. Buckley further argues that Edmund’s confession should not be held legally admissible since “the weakness of confessions as proof of guilt when made under certain circumstances, such as immanent fear of death,” would be “completely worthless in open court without any suggestion of ‘peine forte et dure’” (93). Blackstone supports this argument against “the weakness of confession as evidence,” stating that; “hasty, unguarded confessions ought not to be admissible as evidence,” and that, “the court will generally advise the prisoner to retract it” (94)

The treasons of Cornwall, Regan, Albany, Goneril, Gloucester and Edgar are highly debatable, but is Edmund truly guilty of treason? There is no question that, ultimately, Edmund is guilty of treason for his intent to have Cordelia and Lear murdered.

Moreover, as McNeir attests, Edmund is guilty of treason for his actions against Edgar because “we learn from Regan that Edgar is Lear’s godson and therefore a natural adherent of the king” (190). Furthermore, Edmund is in violation of the statute for adhering to the king’s enemies when he accepts advancement within Cornwall’s services. However, these are not the treasons for which Edmund is charged. Edmund is guilty of treason, but not of the treasons for which he accused of.

Edmund: Villain or Victim? Opportunist or Machiavelli Mastermind?

According to Harry Rusche, “we know before we see his villainous actions the kind of man he [Edmund] is” (163). However, as the old adage goes; you can’t judge a book by its cover. There is certainly no question that Edmund is indeed a villain. No honorable person would subvert their brother, betray his father (to near perfect strangers), plan adultery with two women (who happen to be sisters) and commit high treason by ordering the death of the king and his youngest daughter; but *why* is Edmund a villain? Many scholars and critics have harped on the notion that Edmund is destined to be villainous and evil and they find support for this theory in some of Edmund’s own words. However, a closer examination of Edmund’s lines indicate that destiny is not the cause for his “rough and lecherous” (I. iii. 138) nature and that he is indeed, as Lear might say, a man “more sinned against than sinning” (III. iii. 62-63) or as Edmund says, a “villain by necessity” (I. ii. 128-129). Edmund is, in fact, a victim and the cause for his villainy is born from victimization.

The study of astrology was quite common and profound in Shakespeare’s age and people believed that by considering the alignment of the stars in their constellations one could reasonably determine the disposition of a given individual born under certain astrological situations. By the 16th and 17th centuries a wide variety of astrological materials, ranging from handbooks and almanacs to treatises and translations on Ptolemy’s, could easily be acquired by the everyday Elizabethan audience member. So it is safe to assume that Shakespeare and his audience had at least a basic working knowledge of common astrology. We see evidence of this in the numerous astrological references in King Lear. One such reference, made by Edmund, concerns his conception

and nativity and has been the strongest evidence to support the “destiny theory” of Edmund’s villainy. In Act I Scene II Edmund tells us:

“My father
compounded with my mother under the Dragon’s
tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it
follows I am rough and lecherous.” (I. i. 135-138)

According to Ptolemy, “since the chronological starting point of human nivities is naturally the very time of conception, it is more fitting that we should follow conception when determining the special nature of body and soul, examining the effective power of the configuration of the stars at the time” (223-225). Edmund says that his mother and father conceived him under the astrological configuration known as The Dragon’s Tail. This term refers to two points on the moon’s ellipse where its center crosses the ecliptic. Dragon’s Head is the ascending point where the moon crosses the ecliptic traveling north and Dragon’s Tail the descending point where it crosses the ecliptic traveling south. In astrological terms, Dragon’s Head is believed to be beneficial to one’s horoscope and improves the chances of a favorable configuration. Dragon’s Tail, on the other hand, is seen as maleficent and is detrimental to one’s horoscope. Parr believes that the issue of Edmund’s conception under this configuration is a waste of time because it is not technically part of Edmund’s horoscope; and as Ptolemy points out, it was extremely difficult and nearly impossible to know the exact time of conception, so that leaves his nativity.

Astrologers, during the times of Ptolemy and Shakespeare, believed that the stars in the constellation of Ursa Major possessed the same properties as both Mars and Venus, with Mars in the predominant influential position. Furthermore, Mars was seen as a “malicious worker of evil, particularly when he mingles his influence with Venus” (Parr

82). Therefore, as Parr suggests, it would be reasonable to determine that one born under such a configuration would be ill-natured. However, the issue of the influence of these two planets on an individual's disposition is determined by whether or not their "meeting" was in an "honorable" or "contrary" position³. If they were aligned in a contrary position they could indeed have a maleficent influence on a person and an individual born under such circumstances could be expected to be slanderous, lascivious, adulterous, leering, treacherous, a liar and a seducer of their families and of others. But, if these planets are aligned in an honorable position their influence on a person was said to be positive and to produce individuals who were cheerful, happy, playful, friendly, successful, and able to secure themselves property. True, both Edmund's conception and nativity were under essentially the same evil influences and would lead an individual, familiar with astrology, to the same conclusion as both Parr and Rusche suggest, but what they both fail to point out is Edmund's conclusion:

"Fut, I should
have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the
firmament twinkled on my bastardizing." (I. ii. 138-140)

"Fut" is an Elizabethan term which means "asfoot or Christ's foot" and is the equivalent to a modern day expletive (Mowat 36). Edmund is essentially saying "Whatever! I am what I am regardless" and dismissing any notion that the stars or fate or destiny had anything to do with the person he is.

Edmund's villainy, therefore, is not an issue of fate or destiny. As Claude J. Summers writes, "our complex attractiveness to Edmund results from a number of qualities, but most profoundly from Shakespeare's characteristic tendencies to infuse

³ Ptolemy uses the term "meeting" to refer to the position of the planets in relation to one another; the term "contrary" is used in reference to unfavorable meetings and the term "honorable" is used to denote favorable meetings.

even his villains with a capacity for suffering and to suggest a significant relationship between villainy and victimization; and that villainy can be fully understood only in terms of his victimization,” (225). Edmund’s victimization is two fold in that it stems from both the restrictions which society has placed on him due to his stigma of illegitimacy and what Summers describes as “love’s failure” (225). Summer’s claims that the stigma of illegitimacy is Edmund’s single most identifying characteristic and critics have asserted that this stigma alone is the cause for his villainy. Edmund’s first soliloquy provides evidence to support this theory:

“Thou, Nature art my goddess. To thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of a brother? Why ‘bastard?’ Wherefore ‘base,’
 When my dimensions are as well compact,
 My mind as generous an my shape as true
 As honest madam’s issue? Why brand they us
 With ‘base,’ with ‘baseness,’ ‘bastardy,’ ‘base,’
 ‘base,’
 Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
 More composition and fierce quality
 Than doth within a dull, stale, tiered bed
 Go to th’ creating a whole tribe of fops
 Got ‘tween asleep and wake? Well then,
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
 Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund
 As to the legitimate. Fine word, ‘legitimate.’
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
 And my intention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper.
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!” (I. ii. 1-23)

It is clear from Edmund’s rant on bastardy; the frustration, pain and suffering he has had to endure as an illegitimate child. However, it would be a discredit to him (as a psychologically-complex, Shakespearean villain) to simply chalk up his villainy to

illegitimacy alone. According to Summers, the Tudor and Stuart mind sets, on the subject of illegitimacy, tended to be quite enlightened and overall the Renaissance views on the topic were not so far removed from our own modern points of view, so there must be a deeper cause for such pent up frustration and hostility

The answer can be found in Act I Sc I in the conversation between Gloucester and Kent:

Kent: "Is not this your son, my lord?"

Gloucester: "His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to do it"

Kent: "I cannot conceive you."

Gloucester: "Sir, this young fellow's mother could, whereupon she grew round-wombed and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?"

Kent: "I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper."

Gloucester: "But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged." (I. i. 8-24)

Gloucester later finishes the conversation:

Gloucester: "he hath been out nine years, and away he shall again." (I. i. 32-33)

Some scholars have attested that this interchange between Gloucester and Kent shows a certain level of good humor on Gloucester's part and that Gloucester's acknowledgement of Edmund in the situation is admirable; but as Summers suggests it is actually "rife with

condescension and barely submerged bigotry” and that furthermore, this speech, “in the presence of Edmund to a comparative stranger is a *dehumanizing* condescension” (227). Moreover, Gloucester obscenely pokes fun at the “good sport” of Edmund’s “making” and refers to him as a “knave” and a “whoreson”, words which in Elizabethan times were terms of distain (I. i. 21-24). “Bastardy” as Summers says, “is a dreadful stigma which Edmund is forced to bear, a condition from which he can never escape” (227). Gloucester’s insensitive treatment of Edmund’s stigma is humiliating and it is very likely that this sort of demoralization has been occurring for some time. Despite the fact that Gloucester claims that his love for Edgar is “no dearer” in his “account,” his love for Edmund is far from unconditional (I. i. 20-21). It is tolerant love rather than acceptant love and as France says, “Love’s not love when it is mingled with regards that stands aloof from th’ entire point (I. i. 275-277).” Gloucester, in Summers opinion, has failed to love Edmund unconditionally, treating him with a sort of out-of-sight-out-of-mind policy. He loves Edmund as a “bastard-son” instead of simply as a son and because of this berating, belittling treatment Edmund is the “victim of prejudice which he internalizes into self-loathing” and it is the insensitivity towards this stigma and Gloucester’s lack of acceptance, “rather than the illegitimacy *per se*, which so warps Edmund and motivates his evil” (Summers 227). Gloucester, by exploiting Edmund’s stigma, has caused Edmund an irreversible amount of pain which has lead to feelings of exclusion and vulnerability. In short, Edmund believes himself to be unloved and the damage this has done has rendered Edmund unable to love others. In his ineptitude he fails to be the better man. He redirects his stigma to his advantage working it to aid him in his villainy;

a villainy that will blindly and unemotionally devour anyone in its path; his brother, his father, Reagan, Goneril, Lear, and Cordelia.

Now that a possible cause of Edmund's villainy has been determined yet another question arises: what kind of villain is Edmund? Edmund has been described as: "strangely affecting" and the "vice figure from medieval drama" (Summers 225); "atheist, epicurean" and "everything inimical to traditional Elizabethan order (Bevington 1172);" and even "wittiest and most attractive of villains (Knight 131);" but most interestingly he has been called opportunist and Machiavellian.

Edmund is both an opportunist and a Machiavellian mastermind, worthy to be included amongst the ranks of Shakespearean villains such as Iago and Richard III. By the end of the play Edmund is definitely acting in much the same opportunistic way as Richard and similarly as Richard explains the reason for his villainy "since I cannot prove a lover; I am determined prove a villain" (I. i. 28-30). Edmund too explains the cause for his villainous course "let me if not by birth, have land by wit" (I. ii. 92). However, in the beginning of the play, Edmund acts with the same calm, cool and calculated composure in much the same way as the mastermind Iago. Likewise, just as Iago schemes up an intricate plan involving a handkerchief so too does Edmund have his plan which involves a letter.

Many critics have attacked the letter as a quick and "clumsy forgery," but this speculation does little to credit Edmund's character or Shakespeare's mastery (Ellis 275). Edmund, as Gloucester says, "hath been out nine years" (I. i. 32). Edmund's sole desires are to gain the acceptance of his father and society and to possess a title and lands, but his illegitimacy (under the laws of primogeniture) bar him from these desires and are only

corroborated by his absence. It is very likely that Edmund, fearing to be sent away again, has been scheming and devising all the years he has been away as to how he can obtain advancement. Therefore, the letter he forges to frame his brother does not necessarily have to have been sloppily written on the spur of the moment, it could have been meticulously crafted as a means to buy him more time if need be; and when Gloucester tells Kent that he intends to send Edmund away again Edmund's fears have been confirmed and he has no choice but to put into motion the plans he has made. While the critics do point out the similarity between the content of Edmund's letter and the events that had just unfolded at Lear's court as evidence for a sloppy forgery, this does not necessarily negate the possibility that the letter was premeditated. It only serves as yet another possible example of Shakespeare's often misguided attempt to heighten dramatic affect.

The letter aside, Edmund's masterful planning has, at first, "only a limited objective, his brother Edgar's land," and this objective is quickly accomplished (McNier 189). In Edmund's first soliloquy he reveals, to the audience, his malevolent nature and declares his intent to subvert his brother by villainous means. No sooner has he finished his diabolical declarations, but Gloucester enters. Edmund wastes no time and soon the forged letter is in Gloucester's possession, Edgar is suspect and Gloucester departs leaving Edmund with the charge to mend the situation. A short soliloquy later, Edgar enters. In mere moments Edmund convinces Edgar that he has offended Gloucester and that he should make himself scarce until Gloucester's anger subsides; lest he incur Gloucester's wrath. Edgar agrees and departs. Edmund knows that in order to achieve his goals Gloucester and Edgar must be kept apart and when he learns of the approaching

visit of Cornwall and Regan he quickly uses this knowledge to further his cause. It is at this point that Edmund first becomes an opportunist and from this point on his plans are mostly improvised. Edmund calls Edgar out of hiding, convinces him that he must have wronged Cornwall and that he should flee lest he be killed. Edgar does so and Edmund wounds himself. When Gloucester, Cornwall and Regan arrive they perceive the situation as Edmund had intended, whereupon Gloucester disowns Edgar and promises to award Edmund with all that was his. Edmund's villainy, having accomplished its only sought after goal, would have ended here. However, new opportunities quickly began to play into his hands and soon his ambitions grew.

Edmund's next bit of villainy is "accomplished by means of," yet another, "incriminating letter" (McNeir 191). Gloucester reveals to Edmund that he has received a letter whose imports detail an approaching French invasion intent on supporting Lear and that he means to aid them in their cause. Edmund's original ambitions now expand to include his father's title, he "instantly resolves to betray his father" (McNeir 191) stealing the letter from Gloucester's locked closet and turning it over to Cornwall, whereupon Cornwall rewards Edmund saying that his father's treasonous acts, "hath made thee Earl of Gloucester" (III. iv. 18-19). Just as before with Edgar, Gloucester must be removed in order for Edmund to fully enjoy the Earldom. Cornwall charges Edmund to further betray Gloucester by learning of his whereabouts so that he may be apprehended and punished. Edmund does so, Gloucester is captured, his eyes are gouged out and he is banished to roam the countryside. Edmund is now seemingly free to enjoy the fruit of his labor. Soon after Edmund's possibilities expand, yet again, to include the crown as he becomes involved with Lear's daughters Regan and Goneril. "To the

opportunist have come more opportunities than he can handle and Edmund's willingness to clutch at any advantage put in his way has carried him too far," and it is his involvement in this love triangle, grouped with Edgar's salvation of Gloucester and return and ironically a third letter, that ultimately prove to be Edmund's demise (McNeir 179).

Edmund's Confession: Better Late than Never

“Howl, howl, how! O, you are men of stones!
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone
forever.” (King Lear – V. iii.308-311)

Shakespeare's version of King Lear, and its ultimate-tragedy-ending with the murder of Cordelia and the death of Lear, is widely considered to be Shakespeare's most masterful work and one of the greatest tragedies of all time. However, some critics find the catastrophic ending highly uncalled for. A. C. Bradley claims that, “it does not seem at all inevitable” (Brown 90). While McNeir attests that, “innocent” Cordelia's death is a “cruel trick of fate” brought on by Edmund's “unnecessary hesitation” (McNeir 214). Explanations for Edmund's delayed confession are many, but the most common theories are: 1) Shakespeare does it for dramatic effect, 2) Edmund is silent because of his love for the sisters and 3) Edmund is working his way to a gradual redemption. A. C. Bradley alludes to Shakespeare's tendency to “set upon the dramatic effect of the great scenes” with “certain effects not wholly dramatic; introducing what was convenient or striking; careless of probability, clearness and consistency in smaller matters” (Brown 91-92). Indeed Shakespeare was inclined to commit such a faux pas' in the name of dramatic effect; a striking example of this can be seen in Macbeth in Act IV Sc II when Shakespeare introduces a random, unexplained messenger to warn Lady Macduff of her and her family's impending doom only to have the messenger exit again just moments before they are murdered. However, unlike such instances, Edmund's delay does have a very valid explanation and it is neither love nor redemption, but stubbornness. Edmund is holding out.

It is evident, when reading many of Shakespeare's plays, that he had a deep interest in the exploration of the subject of repentance; its process (whether successful or unsuccessful) as well as its moral and psychologically implications. Evidence of this fact can be seen through many of his characters and in quite a number of plays in which redemption is a major theme: Proteus in The Two Gentleman of Verona, Claudius from Hamlet, and Angelo in Measure for Measure just to name a few. According to Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa Theology*: "two books of homilies" which "were regarded as the essence of Christian doctrine in Shakespeare's time," the acts required for full penance were; contrition, confession and satisfaction or reparation (McNeir 211). Matthews further elaborates these points to include: 1) awareness of one's mortality 2) compassion for the suffering of others 3) recognition of the justice of one's punishment and 4) an experience of the power of love.

Edgar's return at the end of the play to challenge and vanquish Edmund is the point at which Matthews claims that Edmund begins his path of redemption. Edgar tells Albany and Edmund of Gloucester's suffering and Edmund responds:

"This speech of yours hath moved me,
And shall perchance do good. But speak you on.
You look as you had something more to say." (V. iii. 236-238)

Matthews suggests that Edmund's speech meets the requirements for compassion or contrition. Edmund does say that he is "moved" (V. iii. 263) by the telling of Gloucester's suffering, but this does not necessarily mean he has compassion for Gloucester. Furthermore, if Edmund ever had any compassion for his father, why would he betray him and then knowingly allow others to practice their vengeance upon him? Moreover, it should be noted that Edmund's speech here is written with a certain tone of

dripping sarcasm. Edmund says that Edgar's speech, though it has moved him, "shall *perchance* do good" (V. iii. 237). *Perchance*, in this context, means maybe. Edmund's sarcasm continues with, "But speak you on. You look as you had something more to say" (V. iii. 237-238). In modern terms Edmund is essentially telling Edgar "your speech might do good; if I truly cared" or "your speech, although it is doing some good, is annoying me; and if you continue, which it looks like you will, then my interest is lost." As for the other requirements for redemption; a close examination of the text reveals that Edmund does undergo an awareness of his mortality, he does confess to treason and eventually he even confesses to his intended murder of Cordelia and Lear. However, never does Edmund actually repent nor does he achieve forgiveness. Moreover, Edmund never recognizes his demise as justice for his actions nor does he achieve reparation. He does make an attempt at reparation by confessing his intent to kill Cordelia and Lear, but his failure to stop their deaths is a failure of reparation. The only requirement left is an acceptance of love.

Edmund responds to the dead bodies of Goneril and Regan saying, "Yet Edmund was beloved" (V. iii. 287). Shortly after which, he fully confesses his villainous intentions, bringing an end to his seemingly unnecessary delay. Matthews claims that this reaction is, "a recognition of love" and that it, "drives Edmund into the final steps of his conversion" (28). However, as McNeir asks, "how was Edmund beloved" (209)? True, Edmund and the sisters were involved with one another but it was an involvement of lust and mutual greed for power; not love. Goneril did kill Regan for her and Edmund's sake, but then she killed herself (most likely to escape prosecution but possibly out of grief and love for having killed her sister); not out of love for Edmund. Edmund

too has failed to love either of the sisters for he was “contracted to them both” (V. iii. 270) and intent on playing them against one another. So, in failing to love Edmund has failed to achieve the only other step of redemption.

Edmund *is* “moved more than anything” by the sight of the dead sister’s bodies; but for Edmund, “a man who has no real belief in anything,” especially religion, his confession is motivated neither by a recognition of love nor by a need for redemption (McNeir 209-215). Edmund confesses because as John Masefield says, he was “silent for Goneril’s sake” (193). However, he was not withholding out of love for Goneril but out of stubbornness for himself. Edmund is not concerned that he might confide too much information and further incriminate Goneril. On the contrary, he is hopeful that he can still win; that he can obtain his ultimate goal, and he is biding his time to see what (if anything) Goneril can do to help. Edmund’s initial master plan began with a single prospect against his brother and from there it spiraled outward to include his father’s title and, surprisingly, the crown. If Lear, Cordelia and Albany were all dead and if one and only one of the sisters remain, then Edmund’s path the crown and rule of the kingdom would be free and clear. The death of the sisters brings about the downfall of this last plan, Edmund’s ace-in-the-hole. Edmund needed one of the sisters to rule the kingdom, and although he knows he is dying, it is not reason enough to overcome his stubbornness. The sight of the dead sisters is what finally moves Edmund to concede because it is at this moment that he knows all hope is gone. Edmund confesses because he has lost. Contrary to popular belief, Edmund is not all bad. This is a startling moment of clarity for Edmund wherein he realizes; that with absolutely no hope left for him to achieve his goals, there is no reason for Lear and Cordelia to die. His confession is not a sorry

attempt at redemption but a stubborn declaration to prove that, despite all, he could still be the bigger person.

PROCESS

Edmund

“A Study of the Text”

When developing a character I first start by analyzing the text of the play itself. While studying the script I pay special attention to three questions: First, what does the playwright say about my character? Second, what does my character say about himself? And third, what do other characters say about my character? For my character analysis of Edmund in King Lear I have studied the script, gathered all the necessary information from the text and analyzed their meaning to answer these questions.

Mind, Body and Voice

The art of acting provides an actor with an array of tools and processes for analyzing and building a character's psychological and physical nature. Two of the most useful practices I prefer to use are Animal Imagery and Laban Movement Analysis.

Through the use of Animal Imagery an actor analyzes a character in a script and attempts to determine what animal would best represent that character based on the animal's psychical and mental attributes. The actor then draws on certain elements of the chosen animal's mental and physical being to aid in the development of the character. Thomas Cotner III, in his dissertation for the doctorate of philosophy, discusses Shakespeare's animal imagery in Othello and King Lear. Cotner, by "following the animal imagery," asserts that "Shakespeare believed man to be basically weak and depraved, lacking in self-discipline and constantly falling from grace" (vii). Furthermore, "the animal imagery, particularly the alchemical animal imagery, shows how man is changed by sin and devoured and destroyed by a process of transmutation" (Cotner viii). Certainly these observations ring true for the play's theme, but what does the animal imagery say about character, particularly Edmund's?

Cotner describes Lear as an "octogenarian king in his dotage" (viii) and Edmund describes Gloucester as "goatish" in his "disposition (I. ii. 134-135)," but the animal images most mentioned in the play are dragons, horses and dogs. Lear is certainly dragon like in his rage. Lear says so himself when Kent attempts to quail his anger, "come not between the dragon and his wrath" (I. i. 136). Edmund also uses dragon imagery when describing his conception and birth, "My father compounded with my

mother under the Dragon's tail" (I. ii. 135-136). Cotner theorizes that the image of the dragon conjures up images of a sexual nature, for under a dragon's tail, "is hidden the dragon's sting" (100). In astrological terms those born under the sign of the dragon or scorpion are the most sexual. Edmund is certainly a "potent sexual entity," as Cotner describes him, but the dragon, a symbol of British kings, is too grand and too fierce to represent Edmund (100).

The horse, a symbol for "uncontrolled lust," appeared "frequently in late sixteenth century literature" and Shakespeare "uses the horse to represent all degrees of erotic passion and reprehensible lust marked by destruction and a total lack of rational control" (Cotner 115-120). This image can be said to represent Edmund, Goneril and Regan in respect of their shameful, lust-filled relationships for one another. Moreover, Edmund's eventual loss of reason could be nicely represented by the horse's "lack of rational control" (Cotner 120). However, the horse has a certain unintelligent quality which contradicts the nature of Edmund.

Lear refers to Goneril and Regan as "serpent like" (II. iv. 183) and Edmund describes that they are jealous of one another "as the stung are of the adder;" (V. i. 64-65) but while the snake has served as inspiration for many Shakespearean villains, it does not serve well for Edmund. The snake is oily and loathsome but Edmund is attractive and charming. The sisters are also described as dogs. Lear says they "flattered me like a dog" (IV. vi. 115-116) and Kent calls them the "dog-hearted daughters" (IV. iii. 55). The dog is definitely an interesting choice for Edmund and would certainly yield some useful character building elements, but it's still not quite right.

The animal I believe to best represent Edmund's character would be a wolf-dog hybrid like White Fang. In Jack London's novel, White Fang, a Native American Indian named Grey Beaver rescues such a wolf-dog hybrid and her cub. The wolf-dog, Kiche, used to belong to Grey Beaver's dead brother. Grey Beaver christens the cub White Fang and attempts to raise him, but life with the Indians is harsh for White Fang. The other dogs in the camp's pack see him as a wolf and attack him and although he is saved the pack never accepts him. The leader of the pack, Lip-lip, marks White Fang for persecution and he grows up "savage, morose, solitary, and a deadly fighter, 'the enemy of his kind'" (White Fang). In the novel, Jack London describes White Fang's nature and the cause for its development:

"Hated by his kind and by mankind, indomitable, perpetually warred upon and himself waging perpetual war, his development was rapid and one-sided. This was no soil for kindliness and affection to blossom in. The code he learned was to obey the strong and to oppress the weak. His development was in the direction of power. In order to face the constant danger of hurt and even of destruction, his predatory and protective faculties were unduly developed. He became quicker of movement than the other dogs, swifter of foot, craftier, deadlier, more lithe, more lean with ironlike muscle and sinew, more enduring, more cruel, more ferocious, and more intelligent. He had to become all these things, else he would not have held his own nor survived the hostile environment in which he found himself" (London 182-183).

This description of White Fang fits Edmund perfectly. Edmund, being an illegitimate child, has suffered certain persecutions at the hands of society and his father. As I imagine him, he feels tremendous hurt and is constantly afraid for his well being. Edmund has given up on the laws of society and of religion and has embraced the beastly ways of nature where only the smartest and strongest survive. Mentally, Edmund is much like a wolf. He is proud, crafty, cunning, deadly, intelligent and enduring with a cruel and ferocious tenacity for getting what he wants. The mentality of the dog

compliments the wolf's nicely, in that Edmund can appear subjective, friendly, loyal and eager to please. It is for this reason that wolf-dog hybrids like Edmund can never be trusted, because you never know which mentality you are dealing with. When Edmund is among others his physicality borrows from the dog and he is humble, reserved and unthreatening. However, when Edmund is alone he is the wolf. He is strong, powerful and menacing.

While the use of animal imagery is certainly fruitful for providing material for a character; Laban movement, added to the animal imagery, helps to materialize the character into a more humanized, concrete form. Laban analyzes physical movement in terms of: time (sudden or sustained), weight (firm or light), space (direct or flexible) and energy flow (free or bound). These terms are then combined in various ways to represent eight basic effort actions: Pressing, Flicking, Punching or Thrusting, Floating or Flying, Wringing, Dabbing, Slashing and Gliding. When applied to Edmund's physical nature, in regards of a wolf-dog hybrid, when he is the dog he is Gliding (sudden, light, direct) and Pressing (sustained, firm, direct); but when he is the wolf he is Wringing (sustained, firm, flexible) and Slashing (sudden, firm, direct). To sum up Edmund's movement: in terms of Jacques Lecoq's "Seven States of Being," he is the third level, "Economical," which is "Very efficient. No movement is performed for the sake of moving or without reason. Each move is purposeful. The bones are firm and the muscles relaxed yet actively responsive" (Mitchell).

Ultimately, I hope to incorporate the wolf-dog hybrid imagery into my vocal portrayal of Edmund as well. As an actor I have always struggled with my voice and have had difficulty finding full freedom and access to my lower register. So my goal for

this production is to discover and explore those possibilities. When Edmund is amongst others he is the loyal, submissive dog, eager to please and I want his voice to reflect that. As the dog Edmund would be piano (soft) to mezzo-piano (moderately soft) and use a mid to high vocal range. Also as the dog I have been playing with the idea of Edmund using an affected stutter when in conversation with others as a means of lulling them into a false sense of security. As the wolf Edmund's voice would be strong and commanding, fierce and passionate, with full resonance; more of a mezzo-fotre (moderately loud) to fortissimo (very loud) and in the lower register.

Conclusion

The overall journey of this thesis and my thesis performance as Edmund in King Lear has been about analyzing my process, finding what works and what still needs work. Before I started the M. F. A. program at UNL my process was too heavy when it came to my prep work. I would over-prepare my performance and come onto stage with a prepackaged product. Now however, I find that I have learned to do my prep work and to create a rich and engaging character while at the same time allowing for more relaxation and spontaneity on stage. I no longer come to the stage with an entirely predetermined performance.

My research abilities and character understanding have always been one of my strengths, so much so that I often get the note to “stop being so intellectual” or to “get out of my head.” I feel I have further strengthened these aspects of my process, however I now realize that, on stage, I have to put it all aside and engage in the emotions and the raw instincts of the character moment to moment. I have to learn to let it inform rather than control my work.

The one aspect of my prep work that still needs improvement is in the area of my artist’s instrument: my body and voice. My physical abilities, again, have always been one of my strengths and I feel my understanding and development has only grown in this area. My vocal abilities, on the other hand, still need improvement. I have found a greater freedom of use and relaxation with my voice, but nowhere near as much as I can still find. Also I need to improve my pre-performance preparation of my vocal instrument so that I can have the same freedom and spontaneity with my voice as I have started to find in other aspects of my performance.

The actor's journey is life long and although one leg of the journey is coming to an end I know that it is only the beginning in the grand scheme of things. I have learned a great deal about myself and my abilities. I have grown in certain areas of my artistry and further strengthened others, but as long as I pursue acting there is always room for improvement. The learning and developmental processes for an actor are never done. I have built a foundation here at UNL and I know that if I continually work and build upon that foundation my abilities will continue to expand and develop.

APPENDIX A: AN ACTOR'S REHEARSAL JOURNAL

King Lear
An Actor's Rehearsal Journal

We are drawing to the end of the second year of our M.F.A. training here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and are preparing to embark on our thesis studies. Since we first began our training frequent rumors have circulated that our thesis project would most likely be Sir William Shakespeare's "King Lear." If this is indeed to be our thesis project that would please me greatly. Consequently it was written later in his career, somewhere between 1603 and 1606, and in my opinion, is one of Shakespeare's better plays. Lear has one of the richest banks of characters and one of the most moving plots ever devised. Not to mention one of my dream roles, Edmund. When I look at Lear at this stage in my life there are only two roles I see myself as playing and that would be either Edgar or Edmund. Now I know I look more the Edgar type, the hero; but I've played that type of role a great deal and would much prefer to sink my teeth into Edmund, the villain, the bastard. There's nothing wrong with Edgar. Edgar is a great role and I hope someday to play him as well, but for now I feel that to tackle the role of Edmund would be a greater challenge for me.

Its official! We are indeed going to be doing "King Lear" for our thesis. We have auditions scheduled for Virginia and Ian on Wednesday, April 29th during acting class. It is still undecided as to which of the two will direct. Virginia suggested that for the audition we prepare one or two monologues that are geared towards our desired role and that we may prepare a piece from the show if we like. This is a rare opportunity. In the real world it is, of course, customary to be extremely familiar with the show you are

auditioning for and to audition with material appropriate to the show and your desired role. However, it is very uncommon to ever get the chance to audition with material from the actual show you are auditioning for, in fact such a move is usually frowned upon. In lieu of this I am going to prepare both an Iago monologue and an Edmund monologue. Iago and Edmund are very similar Shakespearian characters. They are both villains. They both plot the down fall and demise of their foreseeable adversaries with intricate treachery. They are both driven by lust for more than one woman and they are both driven, I think, by jealousy. There are, of course, other motives (greed, anger, pride) driving these two, but jealousy (the green eyed monster) is, I think, the main driving force. It's one of the most blinding forces there is and that sheer blindness is only cleared when they are utterly destroyed by their own devices and forced to atone for their actions and this is where the Elizabethan notion redemption comes into play. I've decided to do two pieces for a number of reasons. I chose to do an Edmund piece because I want to show Virginia and Ian my take on Edmund. I'll be doing his first soliloquy "Thou, nature, art my goddess..." This is a perfect selection for showcasing my take on Edmund because in it he deals with his innermost, essential issues as a character, it's what gives rise to all of his actions. I also chose to do Iago's soliloquy, "And what's he then that says I play the villain?", because I feel that with this selection I can show them some of the other colors I see in Edmund.

April 27th 2009 – I met with Stan today to discuss my progress this semester and to see what exercises and training I need to be focusing over the summer in preparation for Lear. Between Ian, Alisa and Stan I feel I have made some considerable progress with

my voice this semester, but that I need to find more comfort and consistency within my vocal range/usage. Stan gave me a couple of exercises and daily training techniques to keep up with: a jaw drop with the fingers while breathing and using text. Hopefully I can put this and the discoveries to use in Nebraska Shakespeare on the Green's production of "Macbeth" this summer.

April 29th 2009 – We had auditions today. I felt mine went okay and that I showed them the essence of what I wanted them to see. Ian called me out on some of my vocal issues. I can already tell that my voice will be one of my main areas of focus for this role and I look forward to it.

May 7th 2009 – Virginia e-mailed us today to let us know her decisions about the casting of Lear! I got Edmund, I can't wait! The cast list is as follows:

Duke of Cornwall: Kyle Broussard
 Earl of Kent: Robie Hayek
 Earl of Gloucester: Jason Francis
 Edgar, son of Gloucester: Ryan Kathman
Edmund, bastard son of Gloucester: Daniel Gilbert
 Goneril, daughter to Lear: Beth King
 Regan, daughter to Lear: Tiffiney Baker
 Cordelia, daughter to Lear: Lucy Lockamy

One of the most exciting things about this whole process and the show itself is that the university will be bringing in an equity actor to play Lear. That will be an amazing experience for us all and I can't wait to see who it is. Now starts the research! All I know so far from Virginia is that it will be set in the Napoleonic era and these are some of her initial thoughts:

1. Making the production as simple, understandable and fast-paced as possible. I will cut the script as much as I can and work to keep the pace up. No long scene changes.

2. I think we need a prologue to help sort out the character ties for the audience. It might be smart to have cast pictures in costume and makeup as well out in the lobby or a family tree, or an announcement of Lear's big announcement taking place tonight or maybe all of the above.

I want to begin with a procession that teaches us these facts: King Lear is beloved by Cordelia and the Fool. He is also very arrogant and full of himself. Though he needs a cane, he refuses to use it and when the Fool helps him compensate he is angered. We see a map of the Kingdom giving Cordelia the biggest, choicest, fattest part. We see that Goneril and Regan are dreading this performance. We also see that they are married to Albany and Cornwall and we need to show them for what they are: Cornwall as bad as the older sisters, Albany not so much. The processional is for the public, but we need to figure out a way to have public and private time for each group. Cordelia is eventually with the Fool. Her loving care for her father is apparent.

I haven't decided when the first portion of scene one begins.

3. Making it as theatrical as possible.

There were some lovely images in *Madame Butterfly* done by the Met this season using kokens. The only one I might want to steal is lanterns blowing in the wind. The kokens might help with the storm. Might play characters other than the principle characters, by adding costume pieces or masks i.e. The Knights and some other mad men hiding with Tom in the Mountain hovel.

I also like the idea of using a ramp or rake and some steps. Giving us a reveal as people step up and a great full body focus at the top. This makes silhouette very important.

The storm must be full of flashes and terrible rumblings. There's lots of sound in this show. We'll need trumpets and pieces of heraldry, battle sounds, as well as themes that support the action and mood. The same is true for lighting. Much of the play takes place outside so we'll need naturalistic cues as well as highly abstract cues.

4. I'm hoping to use a guest artist for King Lear. Only the grad actors will be cast this spring. The undergrads will be cast in August.

5. Notes on characters: I'm interested in Lear and Gloucester staying sympathetic. Lear's an old man who was so grand, and now, though slipping fast, is still somehow noble. Even in the end, he has the energy to be a hero and kill Cordelia's attacker. The other good guys: Kent, Edgar, and Albany are left standing, but I'm not sure any one is very hopeful. The bad ones, Cornwall, Goneril, Reagan and Edmund are nearly melodramatic in their wickedness. i.e. maybe Reagan leaves Cornwall to bleed to death. Part of the message is that aging is not easy, and that no one's end is anything but bleak. The good must choose to protect the old from the wolves.

The Fool disappears mid-play. As is sometimes done, I think I'll have Lear will kill him unwittingly.

We've decided to place this in the Napoleonic period with lots of uniforms of various colors and styles. The King is seen in the beginning in full regal power with robes and trappings. The women sport trains. After that scene there is a stripping away of many people's trappings: Lear's, Edgar's, Kent's the Fool's, while the wicked people add to theirs.

October 8th 2009 – Rehearsals start today! Earlier today we met, Steven Patterson, the equity actor who will be playing Lear. He seems like a very nice, approachable, open person. He's got a great look and a solid voice. Steven is a resident artist with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (one of my dream gigs) and it will be an amazing opportunity to see him in action.

Tonight was all about introductions; getting to know one another as well as the play we are all about to embark on together. The designers had some interesting concepts to share. Pat Vendetti is doing the set and he has designed a massive rake with stairs that is reminiscent of old British and Celtic ruins. Virginia informed us that while there will be places to sit; there will be no furniture; that this will be a stand and deliver production. Angela Sharman, the lighting designer is also taking a "mystic" approach to the lighting so that combined with Pat's set we will have an ancient and epic feel to the show. The "storm" sounds excellent! There will be wind machines, CO2 fog machines, hanging strips of gauze fabric and real lightening! Cecilia Sickler's costumes look absolutely wonderful, as always, but what most excites me is her make-up design for Edmund. She wants Edmund to have long sideburns and a curled down mustache. I am extremely pleased with this look because it will give Edmund a wolfish appearance which will coincide nicely with my wolf-dog approach to Edmund's characterization. As Virginia said the good guys will lose their pomp as they go becoming duller in appearance and vice versa the bad guys will gain more pomp as they progress in ranks. Due to the risks of the H1N1 flu virus the school has decided to instill an understudy system. My understudy will be Michael Hanna. Virginia stressed the importance and responsibility

of the understudies to take upon themselves the task of learning the role and the blocking. While the understudies will not get an opportunity to perform Virginia said there is a possibility that they will get a rehearsal. Before the read Virginia gave us a few words of guidance. “Although Lear is a tragedy it begins happily. The play is about many things, but mostly the theme of love: the lack of love and the care for the old. It is about two families and the journey of the two fathers.”

October 9th 2009 – During acting class today Virginia gave us some notes on last night's read. Overall she said it sounded too modern. She said that I was one of those who sounded too modern and that I need more urgency, especially in the “play acting” scenes with Gloucester and Edgar. I need to pick up the pace so that when I have the turn around it will be more affective. If I'm too modern I run the risk of sounding like I'm in a different show. Overall, the acting should be nonrealistic, but it has to be genuine and real. It comes from a deep place. Spend time with each word, say it 50 times, explore it. Not every word, but the important ones. Don't go too modern, casual, relaxed... work with Stan on this. You have to have an enormous heart and an enormous connection with the breath and the words. A connection to story and language, but it's still unbelievably human and bawdy. And as Steven and Virginia discussed “partner is so important in acting.”

The second reading went better tonight. On one of the breaks Virginia told me it was sounding more in line with what she wanted. Steven is amazing to watch. He's a true

professional and I look forward to what all I'll learn from observing his work and his process in action.

October 11th – Thanks to a scheduling glitch I had the night off to memorize and catch up on homework.

October 12th – Tonight's the night I've been waiting for: the fights! Harris seems very open to collaboration, especially seeing as half the cast is now actor combatant certified. When I got up to block my arm cut we didn't even really work it as much as we discussed the location of the cut and the mechanics of it. He said he was confident that I could handle it and we moved on. Once we got to the final fight between Edgar and Edmund I couldn't wait to see what Harris had choreographed for us. He told Ryan and me that our fight would be with knives, which excites me because I've never gotten to fight with knives. We worked through the first half of the fight. It's very fast and vicious and gritty. Once again the moves he has me making as Edmund fit perfectly with the wolf. The moves are very fast, vicious and unrelenting. Almost like I'm biting and snapping, pouncing and lunging in for the jugular with every swing. This is what we have so far:

Edmund

Edgar

Advancing cut low left-high right → Dodge
Advancing cut low right-high left. → Dodge
Pass through cut right shoulder → Block

Corps a Corps

Give

← Cast off

Fall back	← Back hand
Recover/Dodge	← Thrust to back
Dodge	← Stomach swipe

En Guard

Dodge/hand parry	← Stomach thrust
Dodge/hand parry	← Stomach thrust
Dodge/duck	← Head cut left-right
Dodge/jump back	← Stomach swipe
Fall back	← Stomach kick
Stop with stomach kick/roll out	← → Overhead stab

En Guard

October 13th - The first two hours of rehearsal were set aside tonight for movement work and then we blocked Act I Sc I. I relish in-rehearsal movement work. It gives me the chance not only to discover my character, but my character in relation to the other characters. So far the wolf-dog hybrid character approach to Edmund is working out nicely and yielding some interesting results. Two distinct physical gestures began to surface: one for the submissive dog which is Edmund's public face and one for the vicious wolf of the private Edmund. The dog is very closed and reserved, but what I like most is the "stalking" quality of the wolf gesture.

The blocking of this show is going much more differently than I thought it would or then I've ever experienced. Virginia is taking more time to stop and start and to pay attention to intricate details than I thought she would at this stage. It was a bit throwing at first, but I believe it will only serve to better the show and to deepen the experience.

October 14th – Today we blocked two of Edmund most integral scenes Act I Sc II where he gulls Gloucester and Edgar and Act II Sc I where Edmund fakes a bloody encounter

with Edgar causing Edgar to flee. Again Virginia has been giving some very detailed “performance” notes. I can tell she has a very solid idea of how this play looks and sounds and I agree with where she wants the character to go; it’s just a bit of an adjustment for me to be getting such notes so early. However, as difficult as it may be to process I know it will only serve to better our personal process and performances. She said that, most importantly, I need to decide Edmund’s relationship with the audience and that I need to be careful of not making him too slick and casual. Also in the scenes with Gloucester and Edgar I need a greater sense of urgency.

October 15th – Tonight was a very light night for me. We rehearsed three Edmund scenes, but one he is silent in and the other two are very short and poignant. However, I did begin to settle into him a bit tonight and I found some interesting colors to play with next rehearsal.

October 16th – We worked the rest of the fight toninght:

Edmund

Edgar

Running overhead stab	↔ Fend off slash
Duck dodge/retreat	← Head slash
Sweeping duck/dodge	← Cut low right-high left
Sweeping duck/dodge	← Cut low left-high right
Block/Bind over/Head stab	↔ Left shoulder thrust/Give/Block

Corps a Corps

Give/Roll/Recover	← Stomach kick/Throw
Grab/Spin cut left shoulder	↔ Running thrust to back
Running overhead cut	→ Dodge
Stomach cut right-left	→ Dodge
Head cut left-right	→ Dodge

Head cut low right-high left	→ Dodge
Head cut low left-high right	→ Dodge
Right shoulder cut/Give	→← Grab/Coupe
Slap off/Kick/Disarm	→← Stomach thrust/Trip fall
Jump down/Stomach kick	→ Give
Push over with foot	→ Give roll over
Startle head thrust	→← Block
Reinforce/Give	→← Reinforce/Throw to side
Give/Give to knee/Give	← Rib punch/Rib punch/Throw off

**Scramble for his weapon I get it
En Guard**

Feint left	→ Dodge
Feint right	→ Dodge
Stomach cut left-right	→ Grab
Duck/Spinning cut to left leg	→← Puch/Give
Jumping double overhead thrust/	→← Dodge/Close line to stomach
Fall/Drop dagger	
Fall/Drop dagger	← Kick to back
Scramble for blade get one/	→← Grab blade
Recover	
React	→← Cut low left-high right
React	→← Cut low right-high left
React/Drop dagger	→← Stab to left side stomach
Grab dagger/Wild cut right-left	→← Dodge
Wild cut left-right	→← Dodge
Surrender	→← Dagger to my throat

October 20th – No rehearsal for me tonight.

October 22nd – Before fall break Jason had let us know that he was suffering from abdominal pains and bleeding and that he would be getting it checked out. Over fall break he informed us that he was feeling much worse and that he had been admitted to the hospital. We found out today that it is more serious than anyone thought and that he has been diagnosed with Carcinoma. I don't even know what to say about this. It is a hard hit to us all. He will be unable to continue with the show and Virginia is searching for someone to play Gloucester. At this point I can't imagine the show without him. He and

I were already finding a wonderful relationship and some interesting colors to the character dichotomy, but now that is all for not. Sam Hartley is his understudy, but I can't imagine that Virginia would ask him to take on the role and she said as much herself. Tonight's run was strange not only for Jason's absence, but for being in the new space.

October 23rd – I heard today through the grape vine that Virginia has gone ahead and asked Sam to step in and take on the role of Gloucester. I can't say that I am entirely enthused about this. Sam is a competent actor and all, but he is so **young**. I just don't know how the whole dichotomy will work out now with him being the father to Ryan and me. I know that Virginia is in a tough situation and that we are pressed for time, but I wish that we could have found an **older** Gloucester. Nonetheless, I trust her judgment and I know we can make this work.

October 25th – We ran the second act tonight and it was the first night working with Sam as Gloucester. It's very odd not having Jason in the role and I'm very uncertain of how well this is going to work out. However, Sam says he has already met with Stan and that they are working on some vocal and physical changes to help Sam capture Gloucester's age. I hope so because it does not feel like a good fit at the moment and we're going to have to start from scratch on our blocking and our chemistry. The final scene felt odd tonight and false to the show and character. I need to revisit my thesis and some of the ideas I had about this scene.

October 26th – I made some discoveries tonight about the show and the character in relation to my thesis. In my thesis I wrote about how I feel that Edmund does not repenting at the end of the play nor does he feel remorse. While I still stand by this statement I am finding that it does not work for **our** production. It works against the feel of our show and while it might work for a different production, it does not for this one.

October 27th – Tonight was the first full run of the show. For me it felt like a bit of a train wreck. People were missing cues left and right or weren't on stage at all because they were unsure of whether or not they were supposed to be there. However, it was great to get all the words out, and that was what tonight was for me. It does have a good shape, but there are definitely some areas I want to look at as we move ahead, especially the scenes with Gloucester. I'm extremely anxious to fully develop my relationship with Sam and am nervous that we won't be able to get as far as I would like. I played with Edmund's remorse tonight at the end of the play and it felt much better than the sarcastic stubbornness from last night.

October 28th – Virginia took the first part of class today to give us some feedback. She told me that I am right on track with the vocal and physical aspects of the role and to keep exploring further. I took the time to ask her if there was enough of a distinction coming through between Edmund's public and private nature. She told me that it's definitely there, but it's a bit subtle at the moment. She said that my natural boyish qualities are great for the public Edmund, but not for the private and that too much of it is

showing up in the private. At rehearsal tonight I finally asked her about the possibility of Edmund speaking with an affected stutter in his public self as a means of lulling others into a false sense of security. She liked the idea, but was afraid that it might not come across the way I intended and that also it would sacrifice the flow of the text too much. She suggested that I work up two separate physical gestures for the two separate Edmund's. I showed her something I had already been thinking about for the private Edmund and she liked it. She said it looked as though I was removing a mask. She suggested that the gesture for the public Edmund resemble putting on a mask. I tried it tonight and she said it looks too much like an actor habit and not a character choice at this point. I'll keep working with it and see what we get.

October 29th – Tonight was Shakespeare's act 2. Edmund's only scene in this act is quite challenging. It is extremely wordy yet it has to have an extreme sense of urgency. We made a few internal cuts which I think will help me wrap my mouth around the words and to aid in the flow of the scene. In Stan's class today he gave us some feedback as to how he feels we are doing as far as bringing the voice class work to the stage. He said that overall we are all bringing the work to the play, but that we still need to strive for a more relaxed state on stage.

October 30th – Tonight was rather uneventful. We ran Shakespeare's act 3 which only includes a couple of short interchanges for Edmund between Gloucester and Cornwall. However, I did mention to Virginia that the blocking for the Gloucester scene felt extremely odd and she agreed. We worked it a couple of different ways and what we

came up with is working much better. Sam is settling into Gloucester more and more, but he's still got a ways to go. I just don't know how well he'll do. He's still affecting too much of an "old" voice and an "old" physicality and it seems "put on", especially when you consider that Steven, who is actually close to the Gloucester age, doesn't. It's just one of the pitfalls of a young actor playing older and I hope it's one that Sam can overcome. In my scene with Cornwall, Virginia had Kyle and me really look at the relationship tonight and we've discovered some nice moments of love and tenderness. In between the scenes Ryan and I found time to rehearse our fight. We paid special attention to the addition of specific tempos and rhythms and we also changed some of the dodges a bit to add a little variety.

November 1st – Tonight we worked Shakespeare's act four. For Edmund it's a simple exchange between him and Goneril, with a kiss and one line. I'm having trouble connecting to the scene. I feel out of place, like I'm just ornamentation or something. The only thing that was working for the scene was the kiss; however Virginia didn't quite like the timing of it and changed it. I've got to wrap my head around this tricky little scene.

November 2nd – We worked Shakespeare's act five tonight. Virginia suggested that I look at some humor in the "to both these sisters..." soliloquy. I liked the change. I had always approached it from a place of

November 3rd – We had our second full run of the show tonight. I'm feeling very solid on the first act, but the second act to me is feeling sloppy. I think the problem lies in the fact that I haven't made specific enough decisions about the scenes.

November 4th – We worked our act one tonight. Something is feeling off to me in the opening scene of the show. I've been reacting in character to the events as they unfold, but something is off. I think it's that my reactions are false to the character and the situation. I've been reacting with interest and concern; however I don't think that Edmund would. He's not of the world of the court and has no investment in these people. Moreover, Gloucester has just angered and offended him and the residual hurt needs to be taken into account.

November 5th – We worked act two tonight. Virginia suggested that I play with some darker tones in the second act, especially when Edmund has captured Lear and Cordelia. It felt better, but there is still more work to be done and decisions to be made.

November 6th – We worked act one again tonight

November 9th – Tonight we worked our act one. I played with my reactions in the opening scene tonight. I approached it tonight from a place of mild interest and curiosity rather than involved investment. It felt much better and true to the character. Also it gave a greater continuity in the flow of events for Edmund and helped to fuel the anger and hurt of my first soliloquy. Virginia said that I need to be more manipulative with Gloucester.

Right now she said I have the defensiveness of Edgar down, but that I also need to work in some moments where I attempt to incite rage in Gloucester. Virginia also questioned me on my “Wherefore should I stand...” soliloquy. She asked me if I was trying for the audience’s sympathy and I believe that I am. She said that that was okay, but that by the end of the scene I need to drop the other boot so to speak and to make the audience feel foolish for sympathizing with me. Also she said she’d like a bit more arrogance in the soliloquy.

November 10th – Virginia said that my “To both these sisters...” soliloquy was sounding a bit too intellectual tonight. She likes the humor, but she’d also like to see some colors of sex and lust mixed in as well. She’d also like to see more of a discovery on the “let her who would be rid of him...” section. I didn’t quite agree with this at first, but I tried it and I liked the feel so I’ll keep working with it. Lastly she wants the line “shall never see his pardon...” to be cold and to have more weight and emphasis so as to drive home the point of the danger of Lear and Cordelia. We’re getting into tech week soon and Virginia is really putting the wrench to the nuts and bolts of these characters and driving us to dig in and find every last drop of brilliance.

November 11th – We started adding most of the props tonight as we get ready to head into tech. Virginia said tonight’s run was kind of in and out with some things that worked and didn’t work, but that there was a lot of great stuff going on. With all my props and sword that I need at the top of the show I was having quite a frustrating time with the map in the first scene, but Virginia said that it will be pre-rolled so all should be

well. She said we need more energy at the top of the show; it needs to feel like a big “event” is taking place. Steven shared some of his inner character work which helped. He talked about Lear being like Fidel Castro; in that he’s been out of commission for some time and out of the public eye. Rumors have been flying as to his absence; is he sick, dead, usurped, etc. and this is the first time that everyone has seen him for some time. Edmund needs to be more incendiary with Gloucester and I could stand to be a little more dynamic with “O, these eclipses...” Furthermore, I need to have more of a celebration after tricking Edgar. Simply taking the drink doesn’t quite do the job, it needs something more. Finally Virginia told us that it keeps getting better every day and to keep bringing more choices and colors and she reminded us all to be aware of one another and “the picture” and to make sure the audience can “see” the story in each and every character’s eyes.

November 12th – Virginia said the energy was down tonight and to be aware of keeping it up. We definitely added some time to act one, so cues, cues, cues. Virginia doesn’t like the way that “stand up for bastards?” with a question mark at the end. That’s the way it’s written, but she wants me to play some different options. She told me also that I need to take Robie’s coat off at the end of the stocks scene instead of throwing it at him. I brought up the point that I thought it fit the character extremely well and that it also allowed for a later moment between he a Gloucester so she said keep it and we’ll play with it. I can be colder still on “shall never see his pardon...” Virginia asked me to play with the “the wheel has come full circle...” line and she said she liked the more introverted, cynical, ironic way I played with it tonight.

November 13th – Beth and I have pushed the physical relationship of Edmund and Goneril pretty far, but Virginia would still like to see more lust. She suggested maybe another kiss, on the neck? Sam and I had a talk after the first Edmund, Gloucester scene tonight and we think that the direction it's been taken isn't quite working. It feels a bit forced, so we think we'll try marrying some of the previous colors back in to the new approach and see what we get. Virginia wants more sexuality and lust on "lust stealth of nature..." Also I need to make more of a show out of hiding the paper. The "shall see his pardon..." line is coming along Virginia said and the "neither can be enjoyed..." line could also use some colder tones. She said to find some moments of pure black ice.

November 15th – Still colder!

November 16th – First Dress! I love first dress, this is where it all starts to come together and the characters jump to the next level. For the most part my costume gave me little to no problem and even added some nice qualities to posture and gait. I did rip my pants in the fight rehearsal so we'll need to make sure they can be made to last and not to rip every time. We got our actual swords and metal scabbards tonight. Oh, how I hate them. They are noisy and awkward and distracting. The only way to work with them is to keep a hand on them at all times, which I don't want to have to do. Virginia said that everything is still looking good and solid. However, the articulation has been getting a bit rough. She said it was all over the place and that we need to get it molded and as comfortable as second nature. It has to be or we don't have a show. In order to keep up

the pace almost all blackouts have been cut. Virginia closed the night by reminding us how proud of us she is with all the hard work and effort.

November 17th – Second dress. Tonight I discovered the power of my right hand. By this I mean that my left hand has to be immobile as it holds my clunky, noisy sword in place and I was worried about how this would affect my performance to loose the use of a hand to gesture with. However, as I worked my way through my first soliloquy I discovered how useful and poignant the use of my right hand could be to stress a point and to make subtle gestures. I definitely felt colder tonight; maybe too much? Ian was watching and said that I need to keep my back straighter in my bows. Virginia said that “horror” came out “whore” tonight, but it never has, so to watch it.

November 18th – Tonight was the Theatre 112 student show... I still had some slight issues with all the props I have to juggle and I dropped my bloody “wound” rag, revealing that, surprise, I had no wound. I have to figure out how to balance that rag as I put away my sword because it just feels ridiculous standing there with my sword. We had some odd responses to the show tonight especially when we got laughs in places we didn’t expect. They laughed when Beth and I have our intimate moment at the top of the stairs. I know why they laughed and it’s a shame because its an interesting moment in the show with, I think, some interesting choices happening. Hopefully the regular audiences will be more mature. The audience also laughed at moments in the fight; once when Ryan revealed himself and also after my jumping attack. Again I chalk this up to immaturity. On an up note it was absolutely wonderful to finally have an audience to

deliver my soliloquies to. They seemed very responsive and I felt a nice give and take communication with them. After the show Virginia thanked us for taking her notes of articulation and clarity. She said that the show was clear, articulate, simple and enjoyable and that she was very proud of us for all of our really, really nice work.

November 19th – Opening night! Last night was just a warm up for tonight and it definitely felt that way. There was a great energy and everything was popping. The audience reacted much more honestly to the show tonight and they provided an excellent energy to feed off of. I feel I've made some considerable progress the vocal and relaxation issues that have been assigned to me and I'm just trying to have fun and let it go where it goes. It feels a little different every time and I've been discovering a little something new each time that deepens my understanding of the character and the show, that I feel adds to the quality of the performance.

November 20th – The reviews for the show today were quite good and, I think, only to be expected with the quality of work put into the preparation and performance of the show. I personally feel that I have earned the good responses that I have been getting and that I have made considerable improvements in my process and performance abilities. Tonight felt a little like we were acting in molasses. The energy, intent and solid work were still there, but it felt like we were struggling to get the energy up to where it needed to be. However, the audience seemed to be responding well and my level of playfulness with my fellow actors, the audience and the text continues to grow each night. I was presented with quite a challenge tonight in that one of my fingers on my right hand was, again, torn

to shreds by Ryan's dagger during our final fight. It was right at the top of the fight and I had to struggle to keep control of the dagger despite all of the blood gushing down my hand and slathering the blade's handle. I blocked it out as best I could and forced my focus on the task at hand. We made it through the fight beautifully and without sacrificing any of the speed or integrity of the fight. It was an interesting night, and the actual gapping wound and gushes of blood added an interesting touch to my death scene, especially with actual blood coating my hands.

November 22 – Sunday matinee. Dum, dum, dum! We had one night off as a consequence of living in football country. Maybe it was due to having a day to rest and catch our breaths, but we seemed to hit our stride again today. The show was solid and energetic and a good way to close out the first week's run. We now have one whole week of until our next performance. We do have a brush up rehearsal scheduled for the Tuesday we return from Fall Break, but it is for the understudies. I am nervous as to how performances will go. I plan to go over the notes and blocking in my script and to go over my lines each and every day. Hopefully so will the rest of the cast.

December 1st – Tonight was the understudy brush up rehearsal. I had been looking forward to this rehearsal on the basis that it was the first time that I have been understudied and I was looking forward to seeing how someone else would portray my performance. Sadly I was let down. It was obvious that my understudy (as well as other understudies) did not take it seriously. He never made an attempt to study my performance and never showed an interest in talking about the character or my process;

even though I offered multiple times. His performance was dishonest, tongue and cheek and totally self serving. It was, however, refreshing to see how well some of the other understudies did with the process. They not only rose to the challenge but surpassed expectations; and it was amazing to see how well they had studied and were able to recreate their understudied roll. I only wish that I could have had the same privilege and experience as some of my fellow grads whose understudy did so well.

December 2nd – The show was definitely dragging tonight. However, all of the good, deep work that we had done was still there. I know that I personally tried to push the pace as much as I could without sacrificing the integrity of the work or seeming like I was just breezing through my role. I think we were all trying to play it safe and ease back into things. Plus it was only a 112 audience again. On the plus side they seemed less “laughie” at those afore mentioned laugh spots. So either it’s gotten more subtle and that’s selling it or we played the sections with a level of commitment that sold it to the audience better.

December 3rd – H1N1 strikes! Tiffiney has been getting pretty sick for a while now, off and on and it has finally latched on to her with a vengeance. She has been running a fever which is one of the key signs of the virus. She missed the understudy brush up last night and classes the past couple of days. It looks like Katie Gell, Tiffiney’s understudy, will be stepping in to save the day. Luckily Katie is one of the few understudies who not only took her understudy assignment seriously, but also went far above and beyond by studying Tiffiney’s performance and attempting to mirror it. She did wonderfully. Katie

stepping into the role has definitely completed the understudy experience for me. It was a rush to go out on the stage and to do my scenes with her fresh, literally for the first time. It was exiting and it definitely added the same edge to the rest of the show. She did a wonderful job!

December 4th – Tonight the show felt like it was on fire and that it had its full impact and pace back; which is a good thing, because the ACTF respondent came tonight to adjudicate the show. Our respondent was Bob Hubbard from Northwestern and, as Brad Buffum said, he was a “smart guy” with a lot of interesting things to say about the show. He spoke in some detail about all most every aspect of the show both technical and performance related and gave some critique of the main performances. As for my performance of Edmund he said that I “played the rouge nicely” and that I was definitely “on the right track” but that I could push the “clarity” of why Edmund is doing what he is doing. In some respects I agree with this, but at the same time I can’t add to Shakespeare’s language anything that is not there. We did cut quite a bit of the nuance stuff that might have added more of a case for Edmund’s actions, but I think that at the same time we kept the bare bone essentials that were needed to get the point cross. Overall he said that the show was “good theatre” and he was glad to have had the privilege to see it. He said that he has seen “Lear” before but never in a college setting and added that we “pulled it off quite beautifully.” As far as the set and costumes were concerned he thought that they were done very nicely, but that they worked against the “mental mood” of the show. “Lear’s world is askew” and he felt that the set had too much “symmetry” and “balance” and that the costumes looked too refined and clean a

sort of “buttoned up” Lear. Were lights and sound were concerned he really enjoyed the use of the “cyc” especially in relation to the storm. He thought that the correlation of sound to lighting was excellent during the storm, but that the underscoring at the end of the show was “corny” only because the “convention” had “never been established” anywhere else in the show. He said it “pulled him out” of the moment. As for the show as a whole he felt that “it was clear what was being said “ and that it seemed like the words were owned.” Furthermore he said that the show was “conversational and clear” and that we “played the verse intelligibly.” He did say that at times he had trouble hearing some people. He couldn’t tell whether it was do to projection or diction, but it only happened when someone was upstage or turned their back to the audience. Lastly he said that he “appreciated the warmth” of the show and the “handling of the characters as they came to meet death.” All in all I think a good and honest summation of our efforts and hard work.

December 5th – Tonight was the final show. It was very sad for some and a relief to others. For me it was quite sad. I have enjoyed working on Edmund and feeling him grow each and every night. Even tonight I had some exciting new revelations in character and I could have gladly done another week or two or more for that matter. I really think I’ve found the beginnings of that sense of play that Stan and the other professors have been pushing. Each night was more and more of a surrender into relaxation for me and I think I’ve finally found that nice marriage of bringing myself to bear in the character and now I just want to get out there and continue to solidify and fine tune my own personal process. Working with Steven was truly a rewarding experience.

Although I did not have any scenes or interaction with him I was still able to learn a great deal from the experience. Stan had invited him into class to work on some things with us and I mentioned to him that while I had no scenes or interaction with him that I thought that was going to be great because I would still learn from watching and Stan agreed. In fact that is how I would say that I first learned and picked out on Shakespearean training. My first role in a Shakespearean play was a lead role. I was terrified, but as soon as I started watching and listening to the way the older more seasoned company members handled the text and the content I was able to mirror it in a way that made it my own. So in the same way have a learned a great many lessons from watching Steven each and every night from the wings.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Dr. Ian Borden

January 19, 2010

IB: What were your major goals going in this year? With this performance, in your thesis show?

DG: My major goals for the thesis show were my voice work and solidification or solidifying my process.

IB: And how do you feel you did, first on voice?

DG: Voice is still one of my major challenges. I'm still trying to find full freedom and relaxation with it. I feel I have made some major strides, but that I do have more work to do.

IB: Okay, which tells me then that your process isn't solidified yet either. Because I agree. I think you were quite weak vocally. Because I saw the dress rehearsal and then I saw one close to the end of the run. A Thursday or a Friday and there was actually in some sense a regression and I'll talk about that later. It wasn't a conscious thing. It was part of how the role developed. And as far as process goes, in some sense you're able to prepare yourself in the way you need to to get yourself set to the place of vocalization. And for you right now, and we'll talk about this for the audition work too; when you connect in fully vocally, and I've heard you do it in private sessions, I've heard you do it in class; I've yet to see it consistently on stage. But when you do connect in vocally, you're very expressive, really fun to watch; everything else frees up for you as well and it's nice to listen to you and I get tons of stuff from you. When you; for whatever reason the pattern happens and the vocal tension and the throat tension happens: to create, the, the, and you get squeaky for want of a better word. I mean that's not what it is, but it's a short hand for us to work with. You become really one note, literally one note. And the expression goes away and you're not fun to watch and you'll never get hired etc. etc. It's a make or break career thing. Literally make or break. It's interesting, it's not. Night day, light switch. So this is something that you have to be aware that is never going to be a finished product. You8 still never got to that place through your three years here, at least two and a half, were it's happened. Which is unfortunate.

DG: I agree. I agree.

IB: Now, we'll talk about the rehearsal process a little bit. What you discovered and how that role shaped. There was stuff that I saw in your thesis prep where I went "Eee!" I think you're completely missing there.

DG: I agree. Have you read my journal yet though?

IB: Yes, did I not give you a feed back on that?

DG: Not yet and that's something I addressed in my journal. That I often have to try things that don't work before I find what does work. And that section that you mentioned is one of those cases. It's something that, because some of the stuff we cut out of the play, it kind of put me on that path. And I said "okay, I'll see if this is way too left field and just not going to work" and of course that's what I found in rehearsal. It was like bashing heads. It was not fitting in the play and eventually I came back around to more conventional thinking of, "he can not be working against the redemption here."

IB: And that's the good discovery, is that Shakespeare characters, do, turn on a dime, "Now I'm somebody else."

DG: Right.

IB: And then they're totally that.

DG: Right

IB: You know. and I think Richard the third's always the good example. Unless they tell you that they're going to lie they tell you the truth. They are on the nose with what they're saying.

DG: Yeah.

IB: You know, "I'm going to lie to this guy now, watch me." If they don't say something like that then they're telling you the truth. And this is, this is cruel and this isn't exactly what happened, but along the lines of it: a Snidely Whiplash-ness to how you brought Edmund to life on stage.

DG: That's kind of the way I was pushed with it. From the very beginning that's kind of how it was to be approached; and I tried to go against that as much as I could without totally just disregarding what the director wanted.

IB: Right. Now, I think what would have helped fight against that is if your vocal work had been more open. So that when you did have those moments of explanation it wasn't just small and petulant child railing against the heavens. But fully rounded human being explaining how you have been wronged and coming to us and explaining what you're going to do about it. And, and somewhere along the line that part didn't happen and we got "Mwah ha ha ha, watch me do something bad." Unfortunately that didn't work well.

DG: Yeah, I was afraid of that.

IB: Now, what Virginia did with this. This is the most I've ever seen King Lear be about Edgar's journey; and some of what that may have done was push you to be a stronger foil for Edgar and so that may have been part of what went on.

DG: I could see that. I could see that,

IB: Now this is also a very physical role.

DG: Yes it was.

IB: How did you feel about the combat?

DG: Um, I felt the combat was some of the better combat I've done. It was my first time with knives, with daggers; doing a knife fight so I was a little out of my element there in that it was a weapon I was not familiar with. But, for the most part I thought it was good.

IB: How did you feel about the acting in the individual moments of the fight?

DG: I felt they were pretty clear. (Dr. Borden shakes his head) You didn't think so?

IB: No, there was a lot of stuff that happened in that fight which was really terrible unfortunately.

DG: Yeah? Now do you think that had to do with execution or with choreography? With the structure of it as a whole?

IB: Some of it had to do with the stage.

DG: Oh god, yes.

IB: Some of it had to do with the proximity of you guys in relation too; there just wasn't enough space for you guys to play on the stage.

DG: No there was not.

IB: Too many people in the way and it got very compressed which didn't allow articulation of a lot of the things. Um, there were other moments where you gave into some problem. So were doing our fight (Dr. Borden grabs two plastic dinner knives from his desk) "We're going out in the hall now."

(Dr. Borden demonstrates)

And you had a couple of the moments where it was head cut head cut, I don't remember if it was backhand or forehand, but this is essentially; do that move

(I do the moves)

IB: That's exactly what you did. Do it again. Now hold right there. You always went way over the head. You never actually articulated "my intention is I'm gonna cut his throat, or I'm gonna slash his eye ball. Now, just go very slow, but go for my throat this time. No, you're not hitting anything, go for my throat. Slow, go slow, but try to cut my throat. All right, better articulation. Now, that tells the audience clearly that you're going for my

throat. There, now that's starting to get a little bit better. Now, I'm gonna move with it, but keep going. You're still; you see that alligator arm?

DG: Uh hu.

IB: Right, so what you're doing is this. Being nice to me as an actor.

DG: Right.

IB: Be mean to me as an actor.

DG: Okay.

IB: Go for my throat. Now slow; slow, slow; don't go fast. Reach, reach, reach, reach, reach, reach, reach reach! Now, That's articulating!

DG: Okay!

IB: You see that difference?

DG: Yes!

IB: So it's not that; it's "Oh, motherfucker, now I'm in trouble."

DG: Right.

IB: And I'm setting up the next part of the story.

DG: Right.

IB: Or, "now that didn't work, I'm gonna try and do this."

DG: Okay.

IB: Right. So it's an absolute extension of the intention.

DG: Okay.

IB: So what you gave me was, "To be, or not to be. That is the question." (Plain) And even occasionally, "Oo be ur nawt to bee." It kind of got physically mumbled.

DG: Okay.

IB: Does that make sense?

DG: Yeah, totally!

IB: Right? Instead of absolute articulation. It happened throughout and whatever combination of events happened that part didn't get articulated the way it could have.

DG: Okay.

IB: Such as when Ryan does the double punch to your side.

DG: Yeah.

IB: it was like (quick punch, quick punch) and you moved. As opposed to (big punch), "Oh, man that really hurt." And really articulating what that is and all that stuff.

DG: Right.

IB: So it wasn't completely articulated as it could have been.

DG: So, are you saying with that last part that it was inarticulate on both parts or just my side?

IB: No, no. And all of the violence in the show was on some level not as articulated as it could have been. Now, of course I'm a specialist. (laugh) I really, really look at combat in a way that other people don't.

DG: Right.

IB: And if it's not done as fully as I would like it bothers me.

DG: So, you think that it was more that; that maybe it suffered from a bit of general choreography rather than specific choreography?

IB: Absolutely. Now, the big moment where you came in and did the double, like great-flashy-cool super, you know, move.

DG: That was my move by the way.

IB: Was it motivated? No. Could it have been? Absolutely.

DG: So you didn't think it was motivated at all?

IB: The audience chuckled.

DG: They chuckled at a lot of that fight.

IB: Because of the things I'm talking about.

DG: Okay.

IB: The sense of danger wasn't there. It was, "watch us dance." Instead of, "watch us act." Right? It's a prop, it's a weapon. You've got to have that sense of both. And you've got to help the audience follow this. Right? And there aren't too many dagger duels in this world. So, "come along with us. We're going to articulate for you what happens." This is even more important than swords in a way, and I'm guessing that the daggers got chosen in large part because of the space.

DG: The daggers were chosen more, from what I understood, for their personal nature; their down and dirty, gritty nature.

IB: Did you guys get down and dirty and gritty?

DG: Not as much as I would have liked.

IB: Yeah. Yeah, but you guys could have had that sense of it even if you didn't get into the ground and gouge each other's eye balls out.

DG: Yeah.

IB: So, you guys, and I talked to Ryan about this too, you didn't get to the level that you could have by any means, in that section.

DG: Okay.

IB: And it's a tough fight. I mean it was not an easy thing to do. It was a huge, long fight. It was on a raked stage, which is a bitch.

DG: And the only flat surface we had was that little three-foot wide section.

IB: There were other actors too close and you had really crappy knives. I mean they actually physically were dangerous to use.

DG: Yeah, I got both my pinky and my pointer finger slashed open by them.

IB: I would have told my director that those were unsafe to use and I would not have choreographed with them.

DG: Yeah. They ended up being shaved way down, but we were stuck with them.

IB: That's why I would have said, "I'm sorry these are unsafe to work with." Instantly. So, that was another battle. Um, but I think it is symptomatic of what else happened in the show. Is you didn't articulate to the utmost, all of the moments in the show.

DG: Okay.

IB: The same way that you didn't fully articulate combat. "Oh! I didn't open myself vocally as much as I could have." "I didn't completely find the roundness of this character." "I didn't make this moment really sing on stage, with an absolute need." So, if you can learn those lessons and figure out what the next level of it would be. And I've seen you do some beautiful work. I didn't see it in the performance and I was very disappointed. Um, the little bit you did last year in *Macers* (Macbeth) had more clarity than a lot of what you did up on the stage this time.

DG: Okay.

IB: And I'm not sure if it's a scale? That's a lot of stuff to keep in the brain and to bring up to absolute perfection. So, it wasn't, you know terrible. It wasn't the worst thing I've ever seen. There were moments that were good.

DG: Such as? (laugh) I put you on the spot!

IB: Second major monologue. What are you doing?

DG: Okay, the second major one? That is where I have just sent off Gloucester and um, "This is the excellent foppery of the world."

IB: What you were able to do, and this is the thing you did probably the best, is you were able to make sense of the text and bring it clearly to the audience.

DG: So my relationship with the audience was pretty good?

IB: Yes. You talked to us well. You didn't talk at us, which was nice and the meaning of what you were saying was clear.

DG: Good.

IB: The expressiveness of what you were saying wasn't as expressive as we might want it to be

DG: So, what would be some parting advice then? I mean, you know, you keep telling me about how, "it will free up. It will free up." You know that, "five years down the line" all this work I've been doing will drop in. Have you seen it?

IB: I've seen it for moments.

DG: So, I am making headway? It's not just in my head?

IB: The potential is there. In some sense you're not making headway, because you can access it, except when it counts. Which means that you're not getting the victory. You're not advancing in that sense.

DG: Yeah.

IB: And the work I saw you do, vocally, your voice never connected to your lower register in the performance I saw. Which means you're not making progress. Which means you need to know everything else to such a level that you can now, you know, put some concentration, vocally, where you're sitting.

DG: Yeah. Okay. I think that's it unless you have anything else? I think you covered all my questions.

Professor Harris Smith

January 28, 2010

HS: Okay. Harris, Smith and Daniel. It's, uh, the 28th of January and I'm answering your thesis questions. One: "How would you describe my overall growth or development since beginning the program?" Um, I would say, um, of course over the three years everyone's matured more. Um, not just in their craft but as individuals. You know, I think you've come a long way in that way. You're more grounded. I thought you were at least. Um, physically and metaphysically, I guess you could say. Um, and then of course you improved; you already had strengths in your movement and now you've just gotten better. With the stage combat and all the other things it just improved something you already were pretty well confident in. So now it's just making you even better. I mean, we've already talked that scenario; you're thinking about going into stage combat?

DG: Yeah.

HS: So, yeah, it's only making you better. Uh, so, I would say in that area, as an actor you continue to grow. That's somewhere I want you to continue to push yourself. Okay Two: "How do you feel or what do you think about my preparation/performance as Edmund?" Um, reading your thesis, obviously you did a lot of work researching the role. I would agree with my colleagues, now get out of your head and connect more. And that was what I noticed during the rehearsal process, especially sexually, because you talk about it in here (my thesis) and I don't know if it came up before or after we talked. After I took notice of what you were doing in rehearsal/weren't doing in rehearsal. Um, which actually overall, I'm probably skipping down to another question, was the whole sexuality; for Daniel getting in touch with his sexuality even more so.

DG: Okay.

HS: Because depending on our upbringing and all that stuff, it can be very, "no, no."

DG: Right.

HS: So then to bring that out in public, even if it's another character, can be something difficult.

DG: So, you think I could have pushed it a little further still? Dig deeper for that even?

HS: Uh, no. I think you had it, because I saw the performance twice. And I think by the second one, I think you were pretty good.

DG: Okay.

HS: Otherwise, like I said, everything else was great. You justified your choices. You justified the ambition and the seeking love from that father figure of yours. So, I think you were well prepared and it was a great role for you to play.

DG: Cool.

HS: Um, "How were your relationships?" Yeah, Gloucester was great. Edgar was great. Working with the sisters and manipulating the sisters; that was probably my favorite part. As well as, though, your manipulating your brother Edgar.

DG: That was something I was really paying attention to going into performance, because Virginia nailed me in my last Rep. audition, not this recent one, but last summer's; of having a lack of a relationship in the audition. So that was something I really wanted to make sure I focused on. To make sure I was developing relationships that were fully rounded and plausible. That weren't just kind of flimsy.

HS: Yeah, and I think that worked well.

DG: Okay.

HS: Um, with Edgar as well; your feigning to be concerned about his wellbeing, you know? And I think that worked well. Gloucester, you know, I don't know if we blame Shakespeare, but there's not a lot of interaction anyways.

DG: No, there's not.

HS: Which you mention in your research again. So obviously you're aware of that. So there wasn't much really to establish with that. So, I wouldn't necessarily say that was; you know, there's only so much you can do.

DG: Yeah.

HS: Vocal work. I'd say that's your weakest area; your area where you need to grow the most. To continue to find your full vocal range and to find roles that you can explore that more. It doesn't mean that you have a vocal problem in my opinion. I think you're a well-rounded actor, so that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying, given the opportunity, hopefully, especially if you can get involved with this summer Rep. or doing Shakespeare. Because it's always nice, usually if you're in a Shakespeare company, you'll get that one decent sized role and then a small role, which might be a character role, then you can explore and have fun just working vocally. So, I'd say that's an area to continue to explore.

DG: Now, this is something that's kind of been put out there. Do you think my vocal quality, as now, is something that will hold me back professionally?

HS: I don't think so, but I'm not the voice guy.

DG: Right.

HS: I think that your; I've never thought of your voice as something that's a major hindrance. A distraction: it hasn't been a distraction to me or a hindrance.

DG: Because, I know I have work to do on it and certain people have told me that I will not work professionally if I do not develop more than I am right now. And I do know that I have to develop, but at the same time I don't think it's going to keep me from working professionally.

HS: I just haven't; it goes back to what I was saying though or what I've observed. I just haven't seen you have a chance to do other things. Make other character choices, because you haven't really, as I recollect, been cast in roles where you'd really find that. For example, and it's not about me, but just my M. F. A. experience was I got to play a fifty-five year old Irish priest and a fifty-year-old British bachelor. So, I'm working aged voice and dialect, which is going to stretch and grow you vocally. So, I had a variety of opportunities to do that work. But, I say continue. If it's Stan's opinion, he knows more than I do.

DG: It wasn't Stan.

HS: Okay, but just based on my experience of working, other people in regional theatre that I've worked with; and I've worked with some of the best. Just keep working your instrument.

DG: Okay.

HS: And I think you're fine. Yeah, your vocal work wasn't a distraction, but I think continue to try and find your full range that's going to be able to give you more color, especially working Shakespeare. Just making that language come more to life for your audience.

HS: Physically. Like I said it was fine. There wasn't a challenge to be really made with that.

DG: Well now, on my animal analysis, my animal imagery and Laban stuff, where I talk about the wolf-dog imagery?

HS: Yeah.

DG: Was there enough of a distinction between Edmund when he was private and Edmund when he was public?

HS: Oh yeah Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

DG: And that's the main thing I wanted physically and vocally. That there was enough of coloration between the two that you could tell he was being more submissive when he was around people and then more vicious and free when he was alone.

HS: Oh yeah. Yeah and I just thought maybe if anything it could have been more consistent, and I can't pick out a particular scene, but it was there. I mean definitely and it came through in your relationships again too.

DG: Okay.

HS: Definitely with Edgar, because you were his friend, his buddy. You know, you wanted to be there for him and be supportive.

DG: Yeah

HS: Right. Um, and actually even with the sisters. And I don't know if you did this purposefully or not; when first meeting the sisters; well, and there's that sense of not knowing them; but as the play progressed though, as you got to know the sisters, the more the private and the predator came out with the sisters.

DG: I did mean to do that.

HS: Yeah. So yeah, I saw that. So it worked well. It was very clear; and that whole Iago thing again too. Where he's sucking up to the moore and then as soon as he leaves...

DG: He's badmouthing him?

HS: Yeah. So yeah, especially going into the "bastard" speech and the other speech after everything's been kind of mixed up and they leave and then you're like, "okay this is working out great."

DG: "Thus is the excellent foppery of the world."

HS: Yes. Yes. So it worked well with those two.

DG: Um, okay. "We talked about the importance of Edmund's relationship with the audience. How did that play? How effective was I? Was I engaging?" Oh, yeah. You, uh, you brought the audience into your confidence, which worked well. It's not your problem whether they like you or not. Or they just want to grab you off the stage and... Which they should want to do that actually. I think the audience should be taken aback a little bit depending on where they're at. It's like, "well don't make me part of your villainy." You know?

DG: Yeah. Yeah.

HS: Or, "I'm choosing to reject your villainy, even though you're trying to share this with me." Yeah, I thought you worked well with that. You were relaxed and had fun with it. You were enjoying yourself. That's what I was trying to say.

DG: Yes I was.

HS: You were enjoying yourself establishing this relationship with the audience. Um, combat work was great. Especially for how many different times we... well, we didn't change it all that much. I think you worked well, especially with the challenge of a raked stage and a small space to work in. I thought it went well. I think the only thing we could have worked on and improved; but this is on me too, because my time was; I wasn't able to devote as much time. Was, uh, rhythm and pace maybe. Just to make it; the fight a little bit more surprising at times. And like I told you at the ending. If we would have had just two stabs, because three is comedy.

DG: Yeah.

HS: You know, just a slice and a stab, I think, would have done it.

DG: Yeah.

HS: But, that's all, like I said, if we would have had more time to work it. Or if I would have had more time.

DG: To work those more specific moments.

HS: Yeah. But you guys kicked butt and it'll be obvious to anyone, if you ever have a fight audition or something like that, that you know what you're doing. "How could you improve your process?" I don't know if there's much more you could do. I say trust your instincts. Get out of your head. And that's about it. I think the rest is going to come with time. I still think about my graduate experience and realize that there's so much you can absorb. So, it'll just be time now and there's nothing you can do to force that. Just, that you would continue to grow in your craft. Either working with someone or working on stage or in film or whatever you can do to continue to grow. Or doing workshops, like you said before. If stage combat is the thing you're interested in, then start going to these workshops and getting to know people in the S.A.F.D. Remember the S.A.F.D. isn't the only way to go. You know? But, it gives you a legitimacy if you're looking at teaching at a university. Most people want someone who's S.A.F.D. certified. But, like I said, you don't have to be. Like Ryan pointed out. You know, Ryan's doing stuff and I don't know how much he's concerned about being an S.A.F.D person, but it deffinatley, at this point in the eyes of most universities, I'd would probably say ninety-five percent of them, they would like someone who's S.A.F.D.

DG: That's one of my goals; and if Sara and I are going to move to Chicago, I think it will help. I want to be a certified trainer for stage combat through S.A.F.D. and I would like to have some level of certification in a couple of areas of movement; Suzuke being one of them. I dug that stuff like nobody's business. And both of those things are something that they don't offer back in Oklahoma. So, if I do teach someday, I think that's something that would make me very appealing to a university.

HS: Yeah, and you have to look around for someone to train with, well yeah, in Chicago then you'll have it made. I know there has to be some Suzuke person.

DG: Yeah, there's a couple. I've been talking to some people and finding some stuff, and I bought his book the other day.

HS: Good. Good, for you. So, that concludes our interview.

DG: Thank you Harris.

Professor Virginia Smith
Via e-mail February 23, 2010

1. How would you describe my overall growth or development since beginning the program?

I think you work very hard and consistently have added skills and deepened understanding. I have always enjoyed your work. I hope that you will keep trying to be a creative artist in making really vivid choices. Really apply your director's mind to the early actor process. I would like to see you ahead of me, and I tend in class and rehearsal to still be the one giving you the revelations.

Personal Note: I disagree with the last statement. With Virginia, I never feel that I am “behind” or waiting for her to give me “revelations”. I believe that she and I tend to see the character in drastically different lights.

2. How do you feel or what did you think about my preparation and performance of Edmund?

I thought your work was strong. You were always prepared, always a good partner, always safe in the combat, and consistent in all areas of performance.

3. How were my relationships (Gloucester/Edgar/Goneril/Reagan)?

Your relationships were believable throughout.

4. How was my vocal work?

Also strong.

5. How was my physical work?

Excellent. The combat was well choreographed and scary, but I never feared for either of you. Other physical work was consistent with your other choices.

6. We talked about my wolf-dog character concept: how did that play?

I think you enjoyed working with the concept. It never either called attention to itself in a negative way or particularly added anything for me. Perhaps you could have gone further with it and engaged me more one way or the other.

Was there a difference between the public and private Edmund?

Certainly, but there might have been a stronger contrast here, too. This is hind sight talking now, I had no quarrels with your work, but from this vantage there could have been more contrast physically, and energetically.

7. We talked about the importance of Edmund's relationship with the audience. How did that play?

I think it played well. Yes, you did engage the audience.

8. How was my combat work?

Excellent.

9. How could I improve my process?

Go further with your ideas. Look for more vivid choices. You never once tried barking, snapping, growling or howling. You never once marked the territory. I'm not being factious. You are an able performer, but it might be better to be exciting. You certainly might be wrong more often, but you might find things too.

10. Do you have any other comments? Any advice for anything I should continue to work on?

I think I just gave it. How can you be more scary, more vulnerable, more....?

Professor Stan Brown
Via e-mail February 25, 2010

1) How would you describe my overall growth or development since beginning the program?

You've become capable of a great deal more presence while in performance. You are a better listener. You trust being more inside the moment, (not more outside, armed with fixed plans, tricks, gimmicks, and other self-conscious choices). You breathe more, which allows your inner light to glow more on stage. You seem happier in your body. You have more healthy consciousness about your voice. If you continue allowing that consciousness to expand in your performance and life you will ultimately reintroduce yourself to your voice on a level that is a great deal more fulfilling and fun.

2) How do you feel or what did you think about my preparation and performance of Edmund?

I was so thrilled for you. I thought it was excellent casting and so incredibly deserved. Your prep work (what I could observe in terms of voice) seemed spot on. That is, you knew what you needed to work on and you seemed completely open to using Lear as the context in which to realize your growth. More succinctly, I appreciated and enjoyed what I perceived to be your mindset.

3) How were my relationships (Gloucester/Edgar/Goneril/Regan)?

I perceived something specific to each relationship. In terms of voice I perceived:

- Staccato obedience, almost militaristic with Gloucester
- Upper register and melodious cadences with Edgar
- Lower (sometimes Legato/sometimes staccato) with Regan.

When you allowed yourself to relax fully into the moment I stopped thinking about your voice and listened to what you were saying. When you became self-conscious I became aware of muscular tension in your body and a noticeable detachment (in the sound of your voice) from the action in which you were engaged.

4) How was my vocal work?

Stronger and more consistent than it has ever been. You go onto the stage now with a consciousness that allows you to choose (in the moment) to breathe and use more of your voice. You MUST continue FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE to challenge yourself to take greater degrees of relaxation onto the stage. You must also do the same in your real life for the practice to have any lasting impact. You will not ultimately be free of the excitement/buzz/rush of being onstage. You don't want to be (I think) You will just become better (as time goes by) at meeting that energy without resistance.

5) How was my physical work?

Very athletic, strong, daring, sexy, grounded.

6) We talked about my wolf-dog character concept; how did that play? Was there a difference between public and private Edmund? How so?

Again, when you were sharing the moment with your body the quality of ALL your work took a quantum leap for the better I can't say that I "saw" or thought "dog" or "wolf" at any given moment. I saw varying degrees of intensity. Those degrees seemed to "fit" the circumstances in which Edmund found himself.

7) We talked about the importance of Edmund's relationship with the audience. How did that play? How effective was I? Was I engaging/engaging the audience?

I believe you demanded and held focus. I think your obvious comfort in breaking the fourth wall is a comfort you should invite into more of your onstage life.

8) How was my combat work?

I don't feel qualified to answer that. I don't remember feeling embarrassed, which is my barometer for that kind of thing.

9) How could I improve my process?

By increasing your trust in the power of relaxation

10) Do you have any other comments? Any advice for anything I should continue to work on?

Relaxation.

APPENDIX C: CHARACTER INSPIRATION PHOTOS

These are a few photos of paintings that I used to aid in the physical development of Edmund. My main focus was with the silhouettes and physical gestures. There are also some paintings which depict the court and battle environment of the era.





Wolves and Dogs

Here are a few photos of wolves and dogs that I used to aid with the distinction between Edmund's wolf and dog personalities.



APPENDIX D: PRODUCTION PHOTOS



(From Left to Right: Ryan Kathman as Edgar, Sam Hartley as Gloucester and Daniel Gilbert as Edmund)

APPENDIX E: REVIEWS

University Theatre brings 'King Lear' to stage

By JEFF KORBELIK / Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Thursday, November 12, 2009 11:40 pm

University Theatre will present Shakespeare's "King Lear," with professional New York actor Steven Patterson in the title role.

Directed by UNL theater professor Virginia Smith, the play begins a seven-performance run Thursday in Howell Theatre.

The timeless tragedy tells of the downfall of two noble families torn apart by a complex web of familial loyalty, greed, treachery and betrayal.

Seven of "King Lear's" actors are performing their roles as partial fulfillment of their master's degrees in acting. It's the culmination of their two years in the program.

In addition, they also are writing thesis papers about each of their characters, which will be combined into a book.

The following is a look at each actor and the roles they are playing:

Beth King

Role: Goneril, King Lear's daughter

Where you may have seen her before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "Carousel," "The London Cuckolds"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "Goneril is a villain, but I have found it interesting to try to find the humanity behind the anger. She desperately loves her father and wants him to dote on her the way he does on her sister Cordelia. Her jealousy and hunger for power drives her to destruction."

Tiffiney Baker

Role: Regan, King Lear's daughter

Where you may have seen her before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "Carousel," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "Regan is what is considered a Machiavellian villainess driven by lust and greed. While as a contemporary actress I may want to add layers of compassion and understanding, the level of conflict needed to support a script of 'King Lear's' magnitude requires that I stay as close to the evil character archetype as possible."

Lucy Lockamy

Role: Cordelia, King Lear's daughter

Where you may have seen her before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "There is no small thought, quibble or emotion in Shakespeare. The stakes are high, and as an actor, it is a constant struggle to maintain a sense of urgency necessary to propel the action forward."

Robie Hayek

Role: Earl of Kent, a Cordelia supporter who's banished by Lear

Where you may have seen him before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

Flatwater Shakespeare - "The Merry Wives of Windsor"

Crooked Codpiece Company - "Soda Pop"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "One of the elements of 'King Lear' I grabbed on to in my research and throughout rehearsal is the element and theme of status.

"All of the characters are trying to either gain higher status, get rid of the responsibility of status but maintain the title and power of the status held, or like Kent, who has to deal with banishment and the loss of title and status. Kent's struggle with status is emphasized when he comes back to Lear, in disguise, and has to let go of titles and status in order to follow, protect, and serve Lear."

Kyle Broussard

Role: Duke of Cornwall, Regan's husband

Where you may have seen him before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "Playing evil is therapeutic to me! I get a chance to engulf and live emotions that I would never play in real life!"

Ryan Kathman

Role: Edgar, Earl of Gloucester's son

Where you may have seen him before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "Carousel," "An Experiment With an Air Pump," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

Nebraska Repertory Theatre - "The Cripple of Inishmaan," "Vino Veritas," "Anatomy of Gray"

Flatwater Shakespeare - "The Merry Wives of Windsor"

Lincoln Community Playhouse - "A Few Good Men"

Angels Theatre Company - "True West"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "My character, Edgar, disguises himself as a mad beggar in the show. That provided a physical and vocal challenge for me, in addition to some really fascinating research regarding mental institutions in Elizabethan and Jacobean England."

Daniel Gilbert

Role: Edmund, Earl of Gloucester's illegitimate son

Where you may have seen him before: University Theatre - "An American Daughter," "As You Like It," "The London Cuckolds"

Lincoln Community Playhouse - "A Few Good Men"

Meow Chow Productions - "The Surface of the Sun"

What's intriguing about the character or this project?: "Playing Edmund has been one of the most challenging roles I've ever undertaken; it is my thesis, and I've poured more work and effort into it than any other role I've played. Virginia has been great in helping me to navigate my way through this enigmatic villain and to make sure that the work I've done shows through in the performance."

Review: University Theatre offers impressive 'Lear'

By Larry L. Kubert/For the Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Thursday, November 19, 2009 11:45 pm

One of the finer more recent productions of a Shakespearean play is playing the University Theatre stage.

In "King Lear" — Shakespeare's homily to the bane of greed, power and ambition — director Virginia Smith, her cast and crew have produced an effort that smacks of intensity.

Immediately impressive is Patric Vendetti's monolithic, multitiered set design, which both channels the viewer's eye and allows for a variety of playing areas.

The technical side is further magnified by Angela Sharman's impressive lighting and Max Holm's well-suited sound.

But the tragedy would be little without a strong Lear. In this production, Equity actor Steven Patterson crafts a title character whose declining mental stability is presented with deliberation and delineation.

Patterson's Lear is a compilation of emotions, organized and dispensed with tightly measured skill.

The university production also possesses a trove of superb performances from its major supporting cast.

Robie Hayek is excellent as Kent, offering a controlled nontraditional image of a heroic figure.

Initially less pleasing is Ryan Kathman's Edgar, but by the second act, the actor's intent of character growth is demonstrated.

Equally accomplished are Sam Hartley (Gloucester), Trent Stork (Fool), Daniel Gilbert (Edmund), Kyle Broussard (Cornwall) and Tiffiney Baker (Regan).

The University Theatre performance of "King Lear" is a majestic and masterful effort.

Review of 'King Lear' at the University Theatre

By Sarah F. Sullivan

Considered by many to be one of William Shakespeare's greatest works, *King Lear* was definitely given its due on the stage of the Howell Theatre in UNL's Temple Building Thursday night.

The classic play revolves around two noble families, families whose children keep their treachery and greed close to the chest and disguise it as loyalty. Lear (masterfully played by guest Actors' Equity Association Actor Steven Patterson), King of Britain, prepares to divide his kingdom among his three daughters. The daughter who shows the most love for him will receive the largest portion of the land.

While daughters Goneril (Beth King) and Regan (Tiffiney Baker) gush and spout off empty words, Cordelia (Lucy Lockamy), her father's favorite, chooses to speak honestly. It is a meager attempt in contrast with her sister's fine speeches and Lear is so angered that he disinherits Cordelia and divides the kingdom between his two silver-tongued daughters. Lear quickly realizes that the daughter he cast off was the one who truly loved him and through a series of events, quickly descends into madness.

Alongside this plot are the events surrounding the Earl of Gloucester (Sam Hartley) and his two sons, Edgar (Ryan Kathman) and Edmund (Daniel Gilbert). Edmund, Gloucester's vengeful illegitimate son, quickly rises in the ranks as he betrays both his father and brother in order to gain their positions and power, spinning a web of treachery and lies around them both.

Shakespeare is a tricky craft to master. It requires a great deal of talent to confidently deliver the dialogue and emotions so that even those in the audience who have never seen Shakespeare will understand what you're saying. In addition, timing is everything and casts easily run the risk of dragging a piece down without it. *King Lear* has both an extremely talented cast and impeccable timing. Though the play ran a solid two and a half hours, it flew by, thanks to the sound acting presented by the cast and smooth, well-timed transitions that easily maintained the pace of the piece.

The set, designed by Patric Vendetti, is an impressive one. Imposing gray and brown stone steps extended upwards with excellent symmetry, giving it the illusion of great height. Its only flaw seemed to be that the sound didn't carry so well from the very top of the stairs. Often the actors' voices were slightly muted when standing in that place. However, it seemed less noticeable in the second act.

Though the entire cast put forth very strong performances, there were standouts among them. Trent Stork as Lear's Fool was a joy to watch, especially as he bounced and danced easily up and down those stairs without even a fumble. Completely immersed in the part, Stork joked and teased the cast unmercifully, putting forth some amazing facial expressions in the process. Robie Hayek offered a jocular and resilient Duke of Kent, while Beth King and Tiffiney Baker delivered wonderfully wicked performances as Lear's greedy daughters.

Daniel Gilbert pulled off a malicious and scheming Edmund--his monologues throughout the play displayed a real connection with both the character and the audience. Ryan Kathman was equally impressive as brother Edgar, moving easily from cheery nobleman to a convincing madman.

And of course, there is King Lear. Steven Patterson brilliantly led the cast and his delivery was both consistent and painstakingly crafted. Patterson was just as comfortable as a sane Lear as he was when the king descended into madness. It is obvious by the second act that Patterson's Lear is at ease in his insanity, lounging on the stage in his cape of greenery, proudly wearing his crown of woven flowers and ferns. It was a truly excellent performance.

In closing, this show is one that *must* be seen by both Shakespeare fans and people who aren't usually crazy about it. Director Virginia Smith wrote in the program,

"It is my hope that the journey has made you think or caused a discussion or has touched your heart."

King Lear definitely fulfills those hopes and in some ways, exceeds them.

The show will be presented in a split run, due to the Thanksgiving holiday, November 19- 20 & December 2, 3, 4, 5 at 7:30 p.m. and November 22 at 2:00 p.m. in Howell Theatre, first floor Temple Building, 12th & R streets.

Tickets are \$16, \$14 seniors and UNL faculty and staff and \$10 for students. Tickets are available at the Lied Center Ticket Office, 301 N. 12th Street, 11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and one hour prior to performances in Temple Theatre's Lobby.

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